M. A. Persits

Revolutionaries of India in Soviet Russia

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Mainsprings of the Communist Movement in the East

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Preface

I

The October Revolution and the East is a subject which, for all the abundance of studies about it, is still far from exhausted. With more research findings available and more evidence discovered, it becomes clear that the impact of the October Revolution on Asia has been greater and deeper than it was first believed to have been. This is the conclusion one arrives at when reading a book that brings out some hitherto unknown aspects of the influence the Great October Socialist Revolution had on the struggle of imperialist-oppressed peoples.

This book provides an insight into the emigration movement of Indian anti-imperialists, fighters for their country's freedom and independence, into Soviet Russia. That movement, full of dramatic revolutionary struggle, good faith and enthusiasm, could not be stopped by the Himalayas or by the Hindu Kush, or by the all-seeing and all-knowing Intelligence Service, or by the ruthless British colonial administration in India.

Czarist Russia welcomed only merchants and money-lenders from India into her Central Asian provinces. Her authorities had no sympathy for Indian national revolutionaries. After the October Revolution, the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic became a haven for Indian revolutionaries who turned to it for help in fighting for the independence of their own country.

By telling his story of the Indian revolutionary émigrés in Russia, and analysing their class background, their activities and, above all, their views and ideas, the author of this book opens little-known and interesting pages from the history of revolutionary thought in India and the early stirrings of its Communist movement.

Some of the Indian national revolutionaries who came to Soviet Russia were politically organised, others not.

The book considers the ideological and tactical views of revolutionaries from the so-called Provisional Government of India formed by Mahendra Pratap in Kabul as early as 1915, and also from a group that had broken away from that "government" to constitute an Indian section of the Council for International Propaganda (Sovinterprop) in Tashkent in April 1920, and also from the Indian Revolutionary Association headed by Abdur Rabb Barq and Prativadi Acharya. Those politically organised groups had advanced rather similar revolutionary-democratic programmes to achieve India's full national independence and establish an Indian Federal Republic. They held primitive Socialistic views basically rooted in egalitarian and other mostly pre-Marxian notions of the essence of Socialism. They had all welcomed the October Revolution as one, above all, that established the right of nations to self-determination. This interpretation of the October Revolution was perfectly understandable. Indian national revolutionaries were not yet prepared to appreciate all the ideas of the Revolution, least of all, the Socialist gist of its programme. But it was indicative that they stood pat on the idea of a close alliance of the Indian national liberation movement with Soviet Russia. They saw it as their main defender and liberator.

It is not surprising that some of the personalities and groups just mentioned should have combined their unquestionable forward-looking notions with retaining and even accentuating their regressive views, as the fear of a massive grass-root revolution, adherence to conspiratorial tactics and individual terrorism, overemphasising of, and insistence on the liberation of India by force of arms, up to and including armed intervention from outside, to end British colonial rule.

The Indian section of the Tashkent-based Council for International Propaganda came nearer than other Indian national revolutionaries to Socialist ideals and to understanding that India's freedom and independence could be won through a massive and active struggle of the Indian people themselves. This was a major achievement of the group, especially since the mass movement inside India was confined to Gandhian nonviolent civil disobedience.

The book also portrays politically unorganised Indian revolutionaries, describes their attitude to the Soviet system of government, and recalls those of them who, arms

in hand, defended the Socialist Revolution against White-guards and armed *basmach* bands in Central Asia.

As could be seen from a scrutiny of factual material, most of the Indians arriving in Soviet Russia turned to the Soviet Government, above all, for military aid in launching the liberation struggle in India. They believed that the only way to end British rule in India was by force of arms, and that meant arming the masses and getting direct military aid from the Red Army of Soviet Russia. It was not easy to teach those national revolutionaries a sense of reality, so it is not surprising that they should not have accepted much of the ideology and tactics of Marxism.

But some of the revolutionary émigrés did want to learn Marxism in Soviet Russia so as to use it to resolve the political and social problems of their country's liberation from British rule. There were more and more of them, which meant that the Marxist theory of revolution was gripping the minds of the advanced fighters for Indian independence. Many of that group of revolutionaries subsequently took the lead in starting and organising the national liberation, working-class, peasant and Communist movement in India.

This book considers some aspects of the origin of the Indian Communist movement. The immigrant Indian revolutionary community in Soviet Russia produced the first Communist group which declared itself to be the Communist Party of India, though it never became one.

The book provides conclusive evidence to show that the formation of the Indian Communist Party was a long and tortuous process. It took place in a country with a semi-feudal peasantry making up the bulk of the population and an insignificant proportion of proletariat whose class consciousness was at a low level. The bourgeoisie, on the other hand, had a certain amount of political experience to go by. The country was bedevilled by caste and religious traditions, British colonialists maintained a system of ruthless military and political terror which had to be braved by a sweeping national liberation movement of almost all classes of society.

The independent Communist movement in India and similar countries faced considerable difficulties as it emerged. It is worth mentioning that Lenin questioned the very possibility of true proletarian Communist parties, committed to the ideology of Marxism, arising in those countries

in the early 1920s. The fact that the first Communist group was formed of Indian revolutionary émigrés in Soviet Russia and that the Communist Party took years, subsequently, to shape up did attest to the difficulties the emergent Communist movement in India had to surmount.

II

Indian revolutionary émigrés are not the only characters of this narration. The book tells the story of revolutionaries and other citizens from China, Turkey, Persia, and Korea who came to Soviet Russia in 1917 and in the early 1920s. There were at least a million nationals of Asian countries bordering on Russia in the Soviet Republic at the time. Those were not only peasants and artisans who had been ruined and impoverished in their native lands, but also a certain proportion of workers and a host of disinherited people, not engaged in production, primarily from Iran and China. The author has thoroughly analysed the objective and subjective factors of Soviet influence on that huge mass of Oriental working people who had congregated in Soviet Central Asia, the Far East and in Siberia, and constituted a sizable anti-imperialist force.

Having become the eye-witnesses of the Russian revolutionary events and experiencing their liberating effect, the more politically conscious of those citizens took part in the Soviet people's armed struggles against the Whiteguards and foreign invaders. They showed they realised that from November 1917 onwards, the outcome of the national liberation struggles of the oppressed peoples they formed part of was predicated directly on the consolidation of Soviet government in Russia.

Besides, under the impact of the October Revolution and the political work of the Bolsheviks, the revolutionaries and advanced working people of the Orient, who were in Soviet Russia, launched a Communist movement by forming Communist groups and cells.

That was an event of historic importance as the start in training the leading core of the national Communist parties of India, China, Turkey, and Iran. That is to say that the later-to-be Communist parties of a number of Asian countries were built not only in their home countries, but, outside, in Soviet Russia, as well. That was a logical historical twin process arising from the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution. So the book brings out and

looks into problems of general importance for a study of the conditions of the origin of Oriental Communist parties, those in the countries bordering on Russia in particular.

In examining the ideological and political views of the early Communists of India and other Oriental countries, the author shows their similarity, notably, their left-sectarian and voluntarist positions. In other words, the budding Communists of the East were particularly afflicted with the infantile disorder of "leftism", which essentially implied mechanically and undialectically borrowing the Russian experience and, consequently, ignoring the specific historical situation and national environment of Oriental peoples. "Leftism" did, of course, hamper the Communists in their effort to win the masses over.

The author of this book is not the only one to have studied and criticised the left-sectarian views of the early Communists of India and other Oriental countries. Other students have taken this up more than once as well. The present author has distinguished himself, first, by having mustered and set out copious material out of record files on this subject, and, second, by identifying and analysing not only individual left-sectarian views, but also a whole system of views and tactics peculiar to many Communist groups and parties of Oriental countries in the 1920s. The reasons behind that objective phenomenon are brought out in detail and relief to prove the validity of Lenin's conclusion that "economic relations which are backward, or which lag in their development, constantly lead to the appearance of supporters of the labour movement who assimilate only certain aspects of Marxism, only certain parts of the new world outlook, or individual slogans and demands, being unable to make a determined break with all the traditions of the bourgeois world outlook in general and the bourgeois-democratic world outlook in particular".[1]

The book cogently proves that it was the adoption of Socialism as a science to follow by the most consistent and patriotically-minded revolutionary democrats that was one of the major historical factors behind the emergence of the Communist movement in the East. The author writes: "It was not through a labour movement that Indian national revolutionaries advanced towards Marxism, as a rule,—

[1] V. I. Lenin, "Differences in the European Labour Movement", *Collected Works*, Vol. 16, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1963, p. 348.

they were not connected with it at all and, for the most part, failed to see its significance—but through an anti-imperialist liberation struggle and through their affection for the Soviet system of State power which had become the world's most important anti-colonialist force and a real base of support for the liberation movement of the peoples of the East" (see p. 112). "In the Eastern countries," he adds elsewhere, "it was principally the national revolutionary and revolutionary democratic intellectuals that made the first Communists and formed the first Communist groups that gave rise to a Communist movement" (see p. 282).

Of course, with the passage of time, the national revolutionaries came nearer to Marxism, increasingly stimulated by social trends that were gaining ground in the national liberation movement as the working class started independent action in major industrial capitalist centres of India. Indian national revolutionaries turned to the scientific theory of Socialism and to the evidence of its actual application by Russian Communists under Lenin's guidance to see how they had to go about winning their own national independence and resolving their urgent social problems.

The essentially petty-bourgeois origin of the early Communists of the East accounted for their left-sectarian deviation from science-based Socialism which they were yet to achieve. Having studied the outlook of the early Communists of the East and the views of national revolutionary groups in exile, the author has shown that they all were in various stages of ideological acceptance of Marxism.

The author's analysis of the origin of the left-sectarian concepts of the pioneer Communists of Asia and their criticism are of practical as well as scientific value. They can be helpful to the Communist parties of the once colonial countries in countering any relapses into leftist philosophy and action in the present conditions.

The conclusions made in the book are based on a thorough investigation of a wealth of historical evidence, mainly from Soviet public records and on Lenin's works, especially those dealing with ethnic relations and colonialism.

M. A. Persits has succeeded in bringing out some important aspects of Lenin's dispute with M. N. Roy, which has not yet been given an adequate treatment in historical publications, although, as the author has shown, many bourgeois scholars are extra keen on this particular subject. He has provided a novel and convincing characterisation of

Lenin's attitude (at the Second Congress of the Communist International) towards Eastern revolutionaries who had declared themselves Communists but had not yet totally adopted the principles of Marxism. The author has shown that Lenin did not only criticise them for "leftism", but made some concessions to them since, he said, the Communists' proper tactics "calls for concessions to elements that are turning towards the proletariat—whenever and in the measure that they turn towards the proletariat".[1]

An important feature of the book is its pointed argument against the concepts distorting the origin of Communist parties in the East, and attempting to prove them to have been extraneous and unnatural to Asian nations. The author has succeeded in showing that the Eastern Communist movement was brought into existence by a crop grown on the national soil of oppressed Asia and by the conditions largely produced by colonial policies.

These conclusions are most valuable, especially for the present time when the Communist movement in the East is under fire from the imperialist ideologues of Washington. This is, essentially, a book about the problem of proletarian internationalism. Moreover, this problem, so manifestly relevant as it is, has been examined in full accord with the principles of historical research, applied to the period that saw Communist parties spring up in the East, the Indian one, in particular. The reader will get an impressive picture of the formation of the Soviet Union's alliance with the revolutionary forces of oppressed Asia against international imperialism, which Lenin had foreseen and had spoken about with so much conviction. As the historic battle against imperialism went on, and colonial empires broke up, this alliance has broadened to become world-wide and draw in all the socialist countries and anti-imperialist forces of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The revolutionary forces of the emergent nations have thus received and are still getting powerful support in their uncompromising struggle against imperialism, for freedom, peace, democracy and social progress.

Professor *Rostislav Ulyanovsky*

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[1] V. I. Lenin, "'Left-Wing' Communism—an Infantile Disorder", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, 1977, p. 75.

Dedicated to my son Lev Persits

Introduction

It was under the impact of the Great October Socialist Revolution that an organised proletarian vanguard—Communist parties—began to be formed in all continents. This process started to develop in Oriental countries in the specific environment created by colonial oppression and social and economic backwardness. Furthermore, the effect of the October Revolution on the emergence of the Communist movement in Asian countries close to the borders of Soviet Russia was particularly appreciable because it was exercised straight and immediately through the working people of those countries who happened to be in Russia at the time. There were at least a million citizens of China, Korea, India, Iran and Turkey in the Soviet Republic in 1917 through 1920.

The Great October Socialist Revolution and the very first few Decrees of the Soviet Government produced a tremendous impression on all classes of colonial countries and served as the principal factor in moulding the anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist outlook of the great mass of subject peoples who were now increasingly linking their struggle for national liberation with the idea of defending the Soviet system of government. This showed itself in the involvement of thousands of Eastern working people in the Soviet people's armed battles against the Whiteguards and foreign invaders.

The October Revolution and the activities of the Soviet Government heightened the keen interest of the revolutionary sections of Eastern intellectuals and professional people in the ideas of Socialism, which they had developed far earlier on, and aroused, above all, their imperative deter-

mination to study and emulate Russian experience for resolving their own problems of liberating themselves from colonial oppression and feudalism. Many representatives of Eastern revolutionary forces set out for Soviet Russia, and there was a full-scale migration of Indian national revolutionaries into Soviet Russia in 1920. Soviet Russia became a real rallying point of Eastern revolutionary forces and their moral and material base of support in their liberation struggle and their political training ground with Lenin, the Comintern and Soviet Communists as teachers.

The very march of life prompted the Bolsheviks to carry on propaganda and organising work among the revolutionaries and working masses of the East who had flocked into the Soviet Republic. The Comintern and Soviet Communists worked hard to teach them the ideas of Socialism and of oppressed nations' liberation and helped the revolutionary-minded Turks, Iranians, Chinese, Koreans and Indians about to adopt Marxism-Leninism in creating their own Communist groups.

It was in Soviet Russia, too, that the pioneer forces of the Asian Communist movement were trained and formed in the context of a revolutionary upsurge among its working people. It was there, through practical work, rather than through theory alone, that they realised that they needed a Marxist-Leninist party as a powerful organising and guiding force, the only one that could lead the struggles of millions. It was there, too, that Lenin's famous dispute with M. N. Roy, the first Indian Communist, took place. Lenin expended so much energy and so much time for his discussions and disputes with Roy, for he saw him as a typical representative of Eastern emigrant revolutionaries who were turning to Marxism and his outlook as having some typical features of a leftist system of views which many of the budding Communists of the East were developing at the time.

Not only did Lenin discover in the course of that dispute that left-sectarian mistakes were a serious danger to the entire Communist movement of Asia, but outlined the ways to meet it and worked out the fundamental principles for the Communists of Asia to follow in their strategy and tactics for the historical world-wide passage to Socialism.

The Great October Revolution, having accelerated the emergence of Communist elements among Asian peoples,

allowed the Communist International, almost from its very inception, to pose and solve the vital problem of relationship of the two major movements of the East—national liberation and Communist. Lenin's principles regarding national relations and colonialism, which the Second Congress of the Communist International had adopted, have since determined the fundamental aspects of Communists' activities in Eastern countries.

A Communist movement began to develop among citizens from the oppressed East who were in the Soviet Republic, in 1918-1921. Its historical significance consisted in that it was the initial and essential element of the process of laying the ground for the establishment of national Communist parties which went on almost simultaneously in China, India, Iran, Turkey and Korea. That makes perfectly obvious the imperative need for a thorough study of that very important, though not the only one, source of the Communist movement in Asia, the source that was directly attributable to the October Revolution, the Soviet Republic, Lenin and the Comintern. Without such a study, there can simply be no proper understanding of the origin and development of the Communist parties of Eastern countries lying close to Soviet borders. To accomplish so important a task requires an objectified historical investigation of the experience of Communist organisations—Indian, Chinese, and Turkish, to mention just a few of those that were in battle under the Comintern's leadership and with assistance from the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in the Soviet Republic to create their own national Communist parties.

The work hereby offered is a study of the ways and forms of the immediate impact of the Great October Revolution on the emergence of the Communist movement of India and, to a lesser extent, of some other Oriental countries. This involves an examination of the views and activities of various groups of Oriental national revolutionaries, primarily Indian, who were in the Soviet Republic, a study of their ideological evolution that changed their philosophy from petty-bourgeois revolutionary nationalism to Marxism, an analysis of its difficulties and sacrifices. The Indian revolutionary immigrants in the Soviet Republic are seen, therefore, as a noteworthy social phenomenon which revealed the great impact of the October Revolution on India and gave rise to the early elements of the Indian

Communist movement. The first Communists appeared in India proper almost at the same time, coming not only from the midst of national revolutionaries but also from the left wing of the Indian National Congress and trade union officers.

The early stages of the Indian Communist movement, along with its specific national features, had much in common with the Communist movement arising at the same time and under similar conditions in other Eastern countries adjoining Soviet Russia. All of those countries suffered from imperialist domination; they had no independent proletarian movement as yet but were enveloped with a mounting national liberation struggle; each of them had its own groups of revolutionary intellectuals, who, under the influence of the Great October Revolution, discovered the remaking power of Marxism-Leninism and turned to it; the early Communist groups of those nations were springing up not only at home but also abroad, in the Soviet Republic. Finally, such activities of the early Communists of India, as those of M. N. Roy and V. I. Lenin's dispute with him, were of most direct and essential importance not only for the Indian Communist movement, but for all of it throughout the East. It is all this that makes it possible to consider the origin and ideological evolution of the pioneer exponents of the Indian Communist movement in the Soviet Republic as typical in many ways of the similar processes that occurred in other Eastern countries bordering on Soviet Russia.

More than sixty years have passed since the events dealt with in this book. The balance of forces in the world has changed materially in favour of Socialism, and the world Socialist system has emerged and gained strength, with the result that the oppressed peoples of the East were able to end the colonial domination of imperialism, while the proletariat of the Asian countries had not only grown numerically but advanced far ahead in terms of class consciousness. Nevertheless, the problems treated in this book are not of purely theoretical value alone, but of practical interest to the peoples of Asia and Africa, because these peoples are still in battle today against imperialism and its neocolonialist policies backed up by local reactionary forces. Nowadays, Oriental societies are still saddled with the troubles of enslaved landless peasantry and by the poverty and destitution of numerous city grass-roots. Reli-

gious, caste, nationalistic and tribal traditions still keep the working classes of Asia and Africa from developing their political understanding. Left-sectarian views are still widespread among revolutionaries in the East and extremist action is a quite common occurrence. In these conditions, the problems of overcoming leftism, just like those of building Communist parties and promoting the proletariat to leading positions in the liberation movement remain most relevant in the developing countries. Therefore, a study of V. I. Lenin's and the Comintern's struggle to assert the fundamental principles of Communist policy in the East, to educate Asia's pioneer Communists in the Marxist way, and get them to rectify their "left" or other errors is a matter of pressing and direct interest to the present Communists of the East. A study of this set of problems is likewise necessary for refuting anti-Communist concepts which distort the true history of Soviet Russia's and the Comintern's relations with the peoples of the East and its social movements.

Lenin's works were the major primary sources indispensable for an effective study of the problems treated in the book and, in particular, for an investigation of the ideological conception of the early Indian and other Oriental Communists as well as of Lenin's and the Comintern's activities directed towards overcoming left-sectarian illusions and mistakes which were widespread in the incipient Communist movement of Asian countries.

The subject herein treated has arisen from many years of study this author has made of Soviet archives to explore a big and general problem—the Great October Revolution and the Communist movement in the East.

This work is a result of the investigation of scores of records and hundreds of files in six Soviet archives of Moscow, Tashkent and Tomsk. It leads to the discovery and study of a mass of documents relating to the presence, activities and philosophies of various groups among the Indian and other Eastern revolutionaries in the Soviet Republic and the political work the Bolsheviks and the Comintern did among them. But for a very few exceptions, the material given in that book has not yet been brought to public knowledge either in the USSR or outside.

Chapter I

The Impact of the Great October Socialist Revolution on the Oppressed East and Indian Revolutionary Émigrés in Soviet Russia

The emigration movement of Indian revolutionaries into the Soviet Republic which took place in 1918-1922, yet mostly in 1920, was one of the most interesting and striking indications of the effect which the Great October Socialist Revolution had on India.

Scores and even hundreds of Indians crossed over into Soviet Russia, primarily into Soviet Central Asia, from India in search of ways and means of ending British colonial rule and gaining their national political liberation. Some of them dreamed of expelling native, not only foreign, enslavers. Some of the emigrants were members of the Caliphate movement which involved the Muslim population of India,[1] and many representatives of the radical left-wing of the national liberation movement and, finally, some sections of Indian revolutionary democracy which had already adopted the principles of Marxism or were in the process of doing so.

Those people stayed on in the Soviet Republic for months and years, and some even became its citizens. There were all kinds of groups among the emigrants. They had hectic political disputes which brought out their differing ideolog-

[1] The Caliphate movement emerged in India in 1918 as one of protest against the Entente-sponsored dismemberment of Turkey, and taking into captivity the Sultan who was concurrently the Caliph, the Head of all the Faithful. This movement was a form of the national liberation struggle of India's Muslim population against British imperialist domination. The exodus of Caliphatists from India and their resettlement (Hegira) into other Muslim countries, mainly Afghanistan, which began in May-June 1920, was one of the major aspects of the Caliphate movement.

ical views on various matters of the development and relationship of the national liberation and socialist revolution in India. True, these discussions were often compounded and obscured by unsound personal relations within the immigrant community.

The first Indian Communist group was formed by émigrés in Soviet Central Asia. Some of its leaders were the exponents of the most left-radical views in the Communist movement that was emerging in the East.

Before the Indian national revolutionaries set foot on Soviet soil for the first time, the Indian revolutionary émigrés had spent years working in various countries of Western Europe, the Americas and Asia. They had their own views on ways to achieve India's liberation and their organisations to pursue them. Many of those who arrived in the Soviet Republic were, as a rule, a fraction of that immigrant community, ideologically as well as organisationally. So it appears to be well worthwhile saying a few words about Indian revolutionary émigrés as they had been prior to the October Revolution.

The emigrant movement of Indian revolutionaries reflected the processes of division and unification that were taking place in the Indian liberation movement since it surged up following the first Russian Revolution of 1905. The rise of the liberation struggle in 1905-1908 led to a break-up between the reformist and revolutionary sections of the movement. Many of the Indian national revolutionaries who rejected agreement with Britain and called for the overthrow of British domination and for full national independence had to emigrate to various countries of Europe, the Americas and Asia because they were subjected to most ruthless persecution by the British authorities. The Indian revolutionary émigrés were people of different religions, determined in their opposition to the split of the Indian liberation movement on religious grounds and united in battle against British imperialism.

Before and during World War I, Indian émigrés had considerably stepped up their revolutionary activities, having created their fighting organisations and revolutionary centres in various countries of the world. It was easier, in their opinion, to press for the liberation of India with the help of the Powers hostile to Britain in the years of an international crisis and exacerbation of inter-imperialist contradictions.

A Ghadar Party was created in the U.S. in 1913 under the direction of an outstanding Indian revolutionary, Har Dayal. That meant bringing off the unification of scattered Indian revolutionary and patriotic organisations which had earlier emerged in the U.S. and Canada. After Har Dayal's arrest in 1914, the organisation was led by Bhagwan Singh, with Mohammad Barakatullah, a Muslim and subsequently prominent leader of the Soviet-based Indian immigrant community, as his deputy.[1] Ghadar established its own centres in many countries of the Americas (the U.S.A., Canada, Argentina), Europe (France, Britain, Germany, Sweden) and Asia (India, China, Burma, Siam, the Philippines).[2]

In 1914, prominent leaders of the Ghadar Party and of other organisations of Indian émigrés had converged in Berlin. The revolutionaries in those days banked mostly on Germany, counting on her financial and military aid in organising an anti-British armed uprising in India. There was a fairly large group of Indian national revolutionaries in Berlin. Some of them subsequently went to Soviet Russia in an effort to organise an Indian revolutionary centre following new principles. They were Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, Bhupendranath Dutta, Mohammad Barakatullah, Mahendra Pratap, Prativadi Acharya, Abdur Rabb Barq and Pandurang Khankhoje. Apart from them, the Berlin group comprised Champakraman Pillai, Taraknath Das and Bhagwan Singh, and Har Dayal who arrived in Berlin at the end of 1914 after his release from prison.

Virendranath Chattopadhyaya subsequently had this to

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[1] Mohammad Barakatullah (1858-1927) was in exile since 1907. In 1909-1914, he taught Urdu and Persian at Tokyo University and published a propaganda newspaper *Muslim Unity*. Following the outbreak of World War I, he was dismissed from Tokyo University under pressure from the British Government and left for San Francisco to work for the Ghadar Party. In 1915, he arrived in Berlin at Mahendra Pratap's invitation and proceeded together with him to Afghanistan with a German mission under Hentig-Niedermeyer. From 1915 to March 1919, he was in Kabul. (See: *Izvestia*, May 6, 1919, p. 1; *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol. 1, 1917-1922, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1971, p. 17; D. Kaushik, "Indian Revolutionaries in Soviet Asia", *Link*, January 26, 1966, p. 75).

[2] A. V. Raikov, *The Awakening of India*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1968, pp. 76-82 (in Russian); Central Party Archives, Institute of Marxism-Leninism (CPA IML), section 490, register 1, file 208, p. 664.

say about those days: "In 1914 I organised the Indian Revolutionary Committee in Berlin, consisting of almost all the Indian revolutionaries then living outside India."[1] Naturally, he meant only the top leadership of the various groups of Indian revolutionary émigrés. That Committee, working in close contact with the Ghadar Party, carried on extensive propaganda work in Europe to oppose the anti-Indian campaign waged by the British press, and in India to prepare her public opinion for a major battle to end British rule.

The greatest amount of work was done in the Indian forces outside India and in India proper, mostly in Punjab. This orientation of revolutionary activities was due to the firm conviction that it was only the action by individual military units that could start a general popular uprising,[2] and that the success of that uprising could be ensured by the preceding and succeeding support of Powers hostile to Britain. Therefore, they carried on conspiratorial work among small groups of revolutionaries, and also in selected Army units, and least of all thought of conducting mass propaganda work among peasants and workers, and did not believe them to be revolutionary and politically conscious, presuming these qualities to be peculiar only to educated and rich people.

Some evidence of great interest was furnished by Mikhail Pavlovich, a Russian Social-Democrat, who was in close touch with Indian national revolutionaries in Paris where he lived while in exile before and during World War I.[3] "By their social outlook," Mikhail Pavlovich wrote, "most of Indian revolutionaries ... were extremely backward people... They were revolutionaries only inasmuch as they accepted the need to fight British rule over India... I remember a young Indian coming to see me one day (that was in 1909).

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[1] See: the autobiographical note sent by Chattopadhyaya to the Credentials Commission of the Third Congress of the Communist International on June 25, 1921 (CPA IML, s. 490, r. 1, f. 208, p. 664).

[2] Virendranath Chattopadhyaya wrote in his autobiographical note: "This Committee did considerable work in the Indian Army in Persia, Mesopotamia, and in the East. Trained men were sent to India and revolutionaries brought out of India, and literature, arms and ammunition were sent to India on a large scale." (CPA IML, s. 490, r. 1, f. 208, p. 664).

[3] After the October Revolution, Mikhail Pavlovich (1871-1927) was a prominent Soviet statesman and scholar, Comintern official, organiser of the Soviet school of Oriental studies.

His comrades recommended him as an unquestionably reliable man ... ready to give his life in the name of fighting the subjugators of his country. When I told him it was necessary to bring the ideas of national liberation home to large sections of the population, and, above all, to the proletariat of India, he showed great amazement at that kind of reasoning, and said that, from his point of view, the rich were the only reliable revolutionaries, independent people one could fight with, side by side, for the great cause of India's liberation. 'Anyone can buy and bribe a poor man, and what does a poor Indian know about the condition of India,' the man told me."[1] Such "backwardness" was typical of many Indian national revolutionaries long afterwards.[2] Not even after the failure of their attempts to organise an armed uprising in Punjab in February 1915, did they give up their tactics of military conspiracy and reliance on support from Powers hostile to Britain.

In mid-1915, the Indian Revolutionary Committee in Berlin got Mahendra Pratap and Mohammad Barakatullah included in the German mission of Hentig-Niedermeyer[3] bound for Afghanistan. The German diplomats and Indian revolutionaries did not succeed in talking the Emir into an alliance with Germany for joint action against Britain. But Pratap and Barakatullah made good use of their visit to Kabul. They organised a new emigrant revolutionary centre there on December 1, 1915, the so-called Provisional Government of India in exile,[4] with Mahendra Pratap as President and Mohammad Barakatullah as Prime Minister. Obeidullah Sindhi of the Indian Muslim liberation movement became Minister for the Interior. He was one of the leaders of the Deoband Underground Organisation which

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[1] M. Pavlovich, V. Gurko-Kryazhin, S. Weltmann, *India in Battle for Independence*, Moscow, 1925, pp. 31-32 (in Russian).

[2] Nevertheless, extreme left leaders of the Indian National Congress (Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh) understood quite well in those years already that there had to be a mass involvement in the struggle against British rule in India.

[3] See: N. A. Babakhodzhayev, "The Hentig-Niedermeyer Mission to Afghanistan", *Briefs of the Institute of Oriental Studies, USSR Academy of Sciences*, Issue XXXVII, Vostochnaya Literatura Publishers, Moscow, 1960 (in Russian).

[4] "A Short Account of the History of the Indian Revolutionary Committee Called the Provisional Government of India", p. 1. This report, signed by Mohammad Ali and Mohammad Shafiq, was sent to the Turkestan Commission of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on April 10, 1920.

was laying the ground for action against Britain by a volunteer army that was to be formed of individuals recruited in India proper and in neighbouring Muslim countries.[1] Mohammad Ali was appointed Assistant Minister for the Interior, and Mohammad Shafiq, Secretary of that Ministry. Mohammad Wali Khan became Finance Minister, Mohammad Basher, War Minister, and Mohammad Pillai, Foreign Minister.[2] The composition of the newly established organisation attested to a radicalisation of the Indian national liberation movement and a unification of its revolutionary forces of diverse orientations. The Provisional Government in exile was made up not only of representatives of the Ghadar Party and the Berlin Committee, but also of some leading members of the Muslim movement and extreme left-wingers of the Indian National Congress.

The Provisional Government strove to organise an all-out uprising in India with armed assistance from the Afghan Government and independent borderland Pushtu tribes. True to their tactics of alliance with anti-British Powers to get their financial and military support, the Indian revolutionaries in the Provisional Government looked to Afghanistan, with which they had even signed an appropriate treaty, and to Czarist Russia, strange though it might appear. The reason why they looked to Russia was two-fold—Russia's Central Asian possessions lay close to the borders of India and the Anglo-Russian contradictions in the East had come to a head.[3]

In 1916, Mahendra Pratap sent two missions to Russia (the first one in March-April, and the second in August-September) to get the Czar to commit Russia either to outright support for prospective Afghan-Indian action

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[1] See: L. R. Gordon-Polonskaya, *Muslim Trends in Social Thought of India and Pakistan*, Vostochnaya Literatura Publishers, Moscow, 1963, p. 183 (in Russian).

[2] "Introduction" ("Official Representation" of April 6, 1920) from the Provisional Government of India to the Soviet authorities in Tashkent, signed by Mohammad Ali and Mohammad Shafiq. (CPA IML.)

[3] The idea of using Russia to liberate India from British domination had been nurtured back in the latter half of the nineteenth century by some semi-independent little princes of North and Central India, exponents of the so-called feudal nationalism. (See: G. L. Dmitriev, "Russo-Indian Political Links in the Early Twentieth Century. Background to the History of Uzbekistan", *Transactions of Tashkent State University*, Issue 287, Tashkent University Press, Tashkent, 1966, p. 126 (in Russian).

against Britain, or to neutrality.[1] The first mission reached Tashkent, while the other was stopped at Termez. Russian officials of Turkestan, under instructions from their government, reaffirmed the Czar's loyalty to the alliance with Britain.

While the first mission, led by Mohammad Ali, did eventually return safely to Kabul, the second one was arrested by the Czarist authorities of Turkestan and handed over to the British Consular General at Meshhed.[2] The head of the mission was subsequently executed in Lahore. Moreover, the Czar's officers in Persia arrested the third mission of the Provisional Government as it travelled to the capital of Turkey in September 1916, and also turned it over to Britain.[3] Following the February Revolution of 1917, the Provisional Government of Indian revolutionaries once more counted on Russia's aid. In June 1917, they attempted to contact the Turkestan Committee of the Russian Provisional Government. But the Committee refused to negotiate with them and reaffirmed alliance with Britain.

So towards the end of World War I, some of the national revolutionaries came to see clearly that they had mistaken tactical guidelines to go by: counting on military units as the decisive force of the uprising, giving up revolutionary mass work, sticking to isolated acts of terrorism and relying on support from certain imperialist Powers for ending British rule in India. By and large, the plans and attempts to organise an armed mass uprising without long-term revolutionary mass work proved ineffective.

Indian revolutionary émigrés sought effective means of delivering their native land from colonialism. While in Western Europe and the U.S., they began to study the ideas of Socialism. Virendranath Chattopadhyaya wrote in his autobiographical note that in 1910, to escape an arrest in London where he had been active in organising the first Indian Revolutionary Committee, he left for Paris where he "joined the Indian Revolutionary Group, and continued the publication from France of revolutionary literature for

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[1] See: A. V. Raikov, *The Awakening of India*, pp. 103-104 (in Russian).

[2] Central State Military History Archives (CSMHA), s. 1396, r. 6, f. 228, pp. 203, 218.

[3] Ibid., p. 202; "A Short Account of the History of the Indian Revolutionary Committee...", pp. 1, 4.

India". In the same year, "together with the Indian Socialist and revolutionary worker, Madame Cama, he joined the French Socialist Party and was a frequent contributor to *L'Humanité*".[1] Russian Social-Democrats did quite a bit, along with Western Socialists, to bring the ideas of Socialism home to the Indians. Chattopadhyaya writes, for instance, that he and his colleagues "were known to Comrades Charles Rappoport [a French Socialist of Russian extraction] and Michael Pavlovich".

Yet another Russian Social-Democrat, Kirill Troyanovsky (subsequently a Comintern official), was in close contact with Indian revolutionary workers. But it was Mikhail Pavlovich who did the greatest amount of work with the Indian revolutionaries in Paris in 1909-1914. He recalled afterwards that his home was a "meeting place of Indian, Persian and Chinese revolutionaries" with whom he discussed "plans for revolutionary work". He said, besides, that he "edited leaflets for Persian, Chinese, and Indian revolutionaries, and contributed to their magazines and newspapers".[2] It goes without saying that the influence of such personages as Pavlovich did much to promote the ideological evolution of Indian national revolutionaries, yet what mattered most in this sense was the very course of life. Back at the Stuttgart Congress of the Second International in 1907, Indian national revolutionaries learned something about the Bolshevik policy on ethnic and colonial relations (referred to as the national and colonial question, as it is treated in the works by V. I. Lenin—*Ed.*). Subsequently, they had more than one occasion to see that was an abiding Bolshevik policy. In the long run, they found that it was not the Social-Democratic movement of Europe, which was ensnared by reformism and revisionism, but the Bolsheviks who were upholding the right of all oppressed nations to self-determination, independence and national sovereignty. In the years of World War I, and, more particularly, as it drew to a close, Indian revolutionaries came to see still more clearly that Western Socialists were incapable of defending the interests of the people

[1] CPA IML, s. 490, r. I, f. 208, p. 664.

[2] See: M. P. Pavlovich, "An Autobiography", *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the Granat Association*, Vol. 41, Part 2, pp. 106-107; Idem., "India on the Eve of the World War" in M. Pavlovich, V. Gurko-Kryazhin, S. Weltmann, *India in Battle for Independence*, pp. 31-42 (all in Russian).

of the East. Later on, they said as much themselves in a message of September 3, 1917, to the Executive Committee of the All-Russia Muslim Council in Petrograd. While welcoming the position of the Russian Muslims who wanted the Provisional Government under Kerensky to acknowledge and uphold the right of nations to self-determination, they warned against the vain hope that European Socialists could ever take a similar line. "It would be a mistake," they wrote, "for anyone in Russia to think that the [international] Stockholm Conference [of Socialists] [which met in August, 1917][1] would speak out for the peoples of the East."[2] With no more of his illusions about the Socialists, Chattopadhyaya took an important step in his revolutionary career. "I left the Socialist Party," he wrote, "because I disapproved of its moderation in many questions of vital interest."[3] Apparently, by mid-1917, the Indians, having gained practically nothing, besides, from their alliance with Germany, though not giving it up as yet, were coming round to the idea that they had to cooperate with the Bolsheviks. A GDR historian, Horst Krüger offers cogent evidence to prove that Indian revolutionaries set up a branch office of their Revolutionary Committee in Stockholm in May 1917, essentially because that was a convenient place to establish and maintain contacts with Lenin and the Bolsheviks, which could not be done in Berlin at the time. One fact to show that such contacts did prove possible in Stockholm was that as early as November 1, 1917, Chattopadhyaya sent a letter to the Berlin Committee calling for Indian revolutionary activity to be organised in Russia.[4] So that was how, even before the October Revolution, Indian national revolutionaries had turned to the Bolsheviks being sure they would help and support them in their struggle to make their country free. I certainly agree with Erik Komarov's view that in the opening decade of the twentieth century, the Indian revolutionaries' mingling with

[1] Hereinafter, the words in square brackets are the author's.

[2] Horst Krüger, "Das Leninische Prinzip des Selbstbestimmungsrechts der Völker und die indische revolutionäre Befreiungsbewegung", *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften* zu Berlin, Band XVI, Heft 2, 1970, S. 201.

[3] CPA IML, s. 490, r. I, f. 208, p. 664.

[4] Horst Krüger, "Das Leninische Prinzip...", S. 199; *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol. I, 1917-1922, p. 9.

the Socialists of Europe and even with Russian Social-Democrats "was still far from serving to spread Marxism in India. Not even those few Indians who were involved, in one way or another, in Western Socialist organisations, went any further than radical nationalism in their outlook".[1] Things did not change much in this sense by the early 20s either. None of the men involved in the national liberation struggle in India, nor any of the national revolutionaries in exile had yet come to espouse Marxism in full. Only a few of forward-looking intellectuals in India in search of ways to deliver their native land from British rule developed various egalitarian utopian Socialist ideas. While criticising the nation's incipient capitalist development as fateful, they put forward impracticable ideas of a social order based on small-scale production.[2]

So, as we see, the Indian national revolutionaries in exile began to distance themselves from the European Socialists by no means because they saw the futility of their methods of struggle for a social remaking of the world, but because their indecisive and reformist policy on the national and colonial question dissatisfied the Indians.[3]

Beyond question, Indian national revolutionaries in exile were particularly sensitive to the October Revolution and welcomed it at once. They were the first of the political organisations in battle for the liberation of India to establish contact with Soviet Russia. Chattopadhyaya pointed out in his autobiographical note that after the October Revolution he and his associates "openly declared our adherence to the Bolshevik program". (CPA IML.) However, to judge by their views of subsequent years, that must rather have been acceptance of the Bolshevik national relations programme. True, towards the end of the war, the nationalism of Indian revolutionaries began to acquire certain democratic overtones. It may well be that under the influence of the Russian Bolsheviks and the very events of the imperialist war, they no longer idealised bourgeois democracy and began to criticise it strongly, while increasingly insisting on people's rule for India.

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[1] E. N. Komarov, "Egalitarian Concepts in India in the Early Twentieth Century", *Ideological Problems of Modern India*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1970, p. 156 (in Russian).

[2] Ibid., p. 173, etc.

[3] See: A. V. Raikov, *The Awakening of India...*, p. 133, etc.

The Great October Socialist Revolution had a tremendous impact on Oriental nations, above all, perhaps, on India. Recent publications have furnished ample evidence to bear that out.[1]

The measure of the influence of the October Revolution, as a world event of truly great dimensions, depended and still depends not only on its own force and the extent of the social change it wrought, but also on how far the surrounding world is able and prepared to see and understand the meaning of that change. Not even the brightest ray of light can be photographed without a seeing eye or sensitive plate in your camera. Now, the surrounding world's ability to understand and the very extent of understanding are historically objectified notions since they are determined, first and foremost, by the level of the social and economic development of this world (India, in this particular case, as well as other Oriental countries) and depend, consequently, on the presence of elements possessing the requisite measure of culture and political perspicacity, the pattern and intensity of social movements which involve those elements. From this point of view, it is clear that the perception of the October Revolution in the West was more adequate to the essence of the Revolution itself than it was in the Orient.

Not even the revolutionary democratic forces of India could digest the entire programme of the October Revolution in the years immediately following 1917, for they were not yet prepared for it. The working class was too limited in numbers (hardly 0.5 per cent of India's entire population), and it had not yet separated itself from the peasantry either geographically, economically, or intellectually. Besides, the proletariat was multilingual, totally illiterate and subject to religious and caste notions and traditions. Therefore, Communist ideals, properly speaking, were still beyond its grasp. All the foregoing applies, in even greater measure,

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[1] See: *India and Lenin. A Collection*, New Delhi, 1960; Muzaffar Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India and Its Formation Abroad*, National Book Agency Private Ltd., Calcutta, 1962; Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and Communist Party of India*, National Book Agency Private Ltd., Calcutta, 1968; Devendra Kaushik, Leonid Mitrokhin, *Lenin—His Image in India*, Delhi, Bombay, Bangalore, 1970; L. V. Mitrokhin, *India on Lenin (V. I. Lenin—His Image in Indian Publications and Recollections by Indians, His Contemporaries)*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1971 (in Russian).

to the large sections of the peasantry who were destitute, ignorant, fanatically religious, and downtrodden by feudal exploitation and fettering usury. Nor should one forget that the British authorities exerted tremendous efforts to mislead Indian society and Indians as to the character of the October Revolution and the practical activities of the Soviet Government. And if, nevertheless, the awakening of the masses to political life had begun, the only form it could assume in the opening stages was involvement in the national liberation struggle.

A national liberation movement was unfolding in the country for years until it entered a period of a new upsurge towards the end of the world war and, to all intents and purposes, absorbed all the other social movements in India and lent national colouring to the aspirations and sentiments of most Indians. Now, the working-class movement, which was taking its first steps, was, in point of fact, but an element of the national liberation struggle, as were the spontaneous anti-feudal uprisings of peasants for they struck at the feudals who were the mainstay of British domination.

It is natural, therefore, that the October Revolution should have influenced India, above all and most of all, by the democratic, rather than properly Communist, part of its programme. Even the country's most advanced elements, national revolutionaries in exile and in India proper—saw the greatness of the October Revolution, first and foremost, in that it had proclaimed and secured the exercise of the right of nations to self-determination, having freed the colonial peoples of the Russian Empire from the yoke of Czarism and, thereby, pointing the way for the other peoples of the East to national independence.

A group of Indian historians under Gautam Chattopadhyaya produced a collective work to draw a rather striking and realistic picture of the response of Bengali revolutionaries to the October Revolution. Most of them were under arrest in 1917-1918. Nevertheless, even in jails they welcomed the Great October Revolution. While reading the *Statesman*, British reactionary mouthpiece—the only newspaper they were allowed to read, they watched it "abusively fulminating every day against Soviet Russia". As old Satish Pakrasi, a 77-year-old revolutionary, recalled in that book, "this convinced us that something really progressive had taken place there." The Socialist meaning of the Revolution was attractive, though very vague, for the revolutionaries.

"The ideal of Communism as yet attracted us only vaguely," he said. When, however, the revolutionaries had secured, through a hunger-strike, the right to read the national newspaper, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, it would seem they ought to have dispelled that vagueness with its help, and discover the Socialist substance of the revolution. But all they had again discovered was the "anti-imperialist character of Bolshevik Russia".[1]

It is even difficult to imagine how strong was the national light in which the Indian revolutionaries saw the surrounding world. For example, the slogan of the Soviet Government "Down with Capitalists!" was interpreted by the Indian revolutionaries not as an appeal for the overthrow of all bourgeoisie, including their own, national bourgeoisie, but only as an appeal for a struggle against foreign or, to be exact, British domination of India. It was Mohammad Barakatullah who aptly described that when he told an *Izvestia* correspondent that "a capitalist is synonymous to a foreigner, to be exact, the Englishman, for us... Therefore, the Soviet Government's well-known appeal for a fight against capitalists ... had produced a colossal impression on us". And as if to leave no more room for doubt as to what was the most important thing about the October Revolution for the Indians, Barakatullah found it right and proper to stress: "What produced even greater impression was Russia's abrogation of all secret treaties imposed by imperialist governments and the proclamation of the free self-determination of peoples." It was that act, Barakatullah added, "that brought around Russia all the exploited peoples of Asia and all parties, even those far removed from Socialism".[2]

One of the distinguished leaders of the Indian revolutionary émigrés in the Soviet Republic, Abdur Rabb Barq wrote in his letter of May 8, 1921, to the Executive Committee of the Communist International, that "the peoples of India have taken a liking for the Soviet Government because it is an enemy of Britain and a partisan of the principle of self-determination" (CPA IML).

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[1] Gautam Chattopadhyaya, *Communism and Bengal's Freedom Movement*, Vol. I (1917-1929), People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1970, pp. 17-18.

[2] See: *Izvestia*, May 6, 1919, p. 1.

As to the social programme of the Bolsheviks, it had long been viewed as purely egalitarian even by the educated sections of society. In 1923, the leader of the Jugantar, a revolutionary petty-bourgeois party, Amulya Charan Adhikari wrote about the Bolsheviks that they "are opposed to imperialism. That is why the British, the French, and other imperialists are trying to destroy this newborn state. But God's will is different. The Bolsheviks led by Lenin have emerged triumphant ... spreading throughout the world the message of liberty, equality and fraternity".[1]

The British Government understood very well the reason behind the particular anti-colonialist impact of the October Revolution and went all out to keep India impervious, above all, to all information about the Bolshevik principles of resolving ethnic and colonial relations issues, as well as about the Soviet Government's moves to put them into effect. It is just amazing how fast London reacted to Soviet action in that sense.

On December 3, 1917, the Council of People's Commissars published an Appeal "To All the Working Muslims of Russia and the East". Its every word inflamed the hearts and minds of oppressed peoples. "Now, when war and chaos are shaking the old world to its foundations," the document said, "when the whole world is fired with resentment against the imperialist robbers, when every spark of indignation becomes transformed into a mighty flame of revolution, when even the Indian Muslims, oppressed and tormented by a foreign yoke, are rising in revolt against their enslavers, it is impossible to remain silent. Lose no time and shake the ancient conquerors of your land from your backs!... That is your right, for your destiny is in your own hands."[2]

A couple of days after that document was published, on December 6, 1917, the British Secretary of State for India cabled to the Viceroy about an extremely inflammatory proclamation the Bolsheviks addressed to all the toiling classes of Muslims of Russia and the East which was transmitted by the telegraph service and intercepted by the British authorities. This proclamation, he added, must be

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[1] Gautam Chattopadhyaya, "Impact of Lenin", *Mainstream*, November 18, 1967, p. 23.

[2] *Foreign Policy of the USSR. Documents*, Vol. I, Gospolitizdat, Moscow, 1957, p. 35 (in Russian).

withheld as long as possible.[1] On December 13, London again instructed Delhi to take "all possible steps to keep that telegram". But, probably, considering that it would be impossible to meet that demand, the Secretary of State enjoined the Viceroy to organise counter-propaganda in the country.[2]

When in November 1917, the Indian National Congress still demanded nothing but home rule for India, the British governing circles, faced by the rising influence of the Russian events, had already realised what that could lead to. Therefore, they launched a wide-scale campaign in the press to scare the Indian national bourgeoisie with something like the Russian chaos and anarchy which, they claimed, were consequent on the advent to self-government of a nation that was not yet ripe for it. The *Pioneer* newspaper wrote on November 19, 1917: "Russia at present is providing the world with an object lesson of the dangers attending the premature acquisition of representative institutions before a country is fitted for them. Home rule in Russia has virtually been synonymous to no rule... The moral is obvious and should be taken to heart by all impatient politicians in this country. Self-government ... is a plant of slow growth and any attempt to force it prematurely can only result in misrule, turmoil and anarchy."[3]

The measures taken by the British authorities in India produced rather meagre results. In any case, six months after the October Revolution in Russia, on April 22, 1918, when Edwin Samuel Montagu, British Secretary of State for India, and Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy, signed the Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms, they already found it necessary to refer this to the influence which the Russian Revolution was having on the political consciousness of large sections of the Indian people: "The revolution in Russia," they pointed out, "in its beginning was regarded in India as a triumph over despotism ... it has given impetus to Indian political aspirations."[4]

That was a real truth. It should, however, be pointed

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[1] See: L. V. Mitrokhin. *India on Lenin...*, p. 29 (in Russian).
[2] Ibid.
[3] Quoted from: Zafar Imam, *Colonialism in East-West Relations. A Study of Soviet Policy Towards India and Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1947*, Eastman Publications, New Delhi, 1969, p. 57.
[4] Quoted from: M. R. Masani, *The Communist Party of India. A Short History*, Dereck Verschoyle, London, 1954, p. 11.

out that as time went on, the British authorities in India were more willing to write and talk in official reports and speeches about the supposedly real threat of Bolshevism in India. Faced by the sweeping surge of the Indian people's liberation struggle, the British authorities attributed any anti-British act to the scheming of Moscow and, subsequently, of the Comintern, and listed just about every radically-minded national revolutionary as a Bolshevik.

In 1918, Indian revolutionary Bharat Das wrote: "For the past ten years, Indian revolutionaries have been hounded as 'anarchists'. Today, however, ... they are called 'Indian Bolsheviks'."[1] When in the spring of 1919, the colonial authorities passed the draconian Rowlatt Bill,[2] the wrathful protest it had touched off along with an upsurge of the national liberation struggle was proclaimed in *The Times* of March 20, 1919, as part of the "Bolshevik plans to raise revolution in India". The British press attempted to pass off even the major element of the Caliphate movement—the mass exodus from India into neighbouring Muslim countries—as something like an aftermath of Bolshevik propaganda. For example, the *Oud* newspaper in an article "Bolshevik Intrigues in India" wrote on June 17, 1922: "The Hegira movement, which was considered to be purely religious, has, in fact, turned out to be political... A knowledgeable person must agree with us that the Hegira movement is not based on religious doctrines but has been brought about by the spread of Russian propaganda..."[3] The British administration declared anti-feudal risings of peasants in Bihar, United Provinces and Bengal to be "of a clearly Bolshevik kind".[4] The early moves to set up trade union-type working-class organisations were also declared to be the work of the Bolsheviks. The Soviet Mission in Kabul reported to the Turkestan Commission of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on May 22, 1922 that British newspapers alleged that the workers' strike on the North-Western Railway early in 1920 was of a "definitely Bolshevik character". Although no real prerequisites existed

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[1] Quoted from: A. V. Raikov, *The Awakening of India...*, p. 130.

[2] See: idem., *The National Revolutionary Organisations of India in Battle for Freedom, 1905-1930*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1979, p. 84 (in Russian).

[3] The name of the paper and the quotation from it were cited in a report from the Soviet Mission in Kabul.

[4] See: L. V. Mitrokhin, *India on Lenin...*, p. 41.

as yet for a Socialist revolution in that country, and the overwhelming majority of Indian revolutionaries were still far from accepting the ideas of scientific Communism, British colonial officials were hard at work to prove the reality of the Bolshevik threat in India.

The reason for that must have been not only due to the really potent impact of the ideas of the October Revolution on Indian society. There was, besides, the direct interest of the Indian Civil Service—that omnipresent and all-knowing colonial administration—in saving its face in front of the London authorities which expressed their displeasure over its inability to placate India. Furthermore, that gave an opportunity to British colonial officials and to London itself to suggest the foreign origin not only of the Communist movement, but of radical forms of the national liberation struggle in that country as well.

Properly speaking, this argument is still maintained by bourgeois historians. M. R. Masani, Secretary-General of Swatantra, a reactionary right-wing party of modern India, was clearly exaggerating when he wrote of those times: "The intellectual and emotional climate in India in the early twenties was receptive to the ideas of Communism."[1] It was receptive, sure enough, but to what ideas of the Bolsheviks? Above all and essentially, to the ideas expressed in the slogan of the right of nations to self-determination or national secession, which the Bolsheviks had begun to put into practice.

Naturally, the last thing I want to do is to play down the influence of the ideas of the October Revolution on India. All I want to say is that in the first years or two following the Russian Revolution that influence was basically expressed in a radicalisation of the national liberation tendencies of Indian society, and only afterwards did the Communist tendencies, in their true sense, begin to show themselves. It took even the most advanced exponents of Indian revolutionary democracy some time to grasp the ideas of Communism, at least in their very primordial form, while the idea behind Lenin's slogan of the "right of nations to self-determination" fell on what had long since been prepared ground in India. That was to be most clearly seen in the movement of organised and unorganised groups of Indian revolutionaries into the Soviet Republic.

[1] M. R. Masani, *The Communist Party of India...*, p. 20.

This does not, of course, mean that the left Indian national revolutionaries, closely looking at the image of the October Revolution, should have totally failed to notice its social features and its Socialist substance. The ideas of social equality and justice, international solidarity, even that of the organisation of the masses and an anti-feudal peasant revolution were not foreign to individual revolutionaries. Some of them shared these ideas, but interpreted them in their own utopian, petty-bourgeois and revolutionary-nationalistic way. Therefore, they viewed the ideas of the October Revolution and the scale of work it had done proceeding from Indian realities and from the requirements to be met to overthrow British domination.

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The emigration movement of hundreds of Indian revolutionaries into Soviet Russia was the most obvious expression of the tremendous effect of the October Revolution on Indian society.

However, many of present-day bourgeois historians seek to belittle the international significance of the October Revolution and, by endless trickery, try to prove that its influence on India was insignificant and superficial. One example is provided by the book of Indian historian, Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, reader in international relations at Jadavpur University, who extolls Indian nationalism and proclaims Communism to be a doctrine entirely foreign and unacceptable to India.

He argues that "inside India ... the Russian Revolution ... did not produce anything more than a ripple".[1] This argument, in substance, has been brought up by a number of other bourgeois authors. But what is it built on?

Such American historians as David Druhe, John Haithcox, Gene Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, to mention just a few, while denying the ideological impact of the October Revolution on the national liberation movement of India, have been putting down all events showing up such an impact to the work of the Moscow-paid agents of the Comintern.

[1] J. Bandyopadhyaya, *Indian Nationalism Versus International Communism. Role of Ideology in International Politics*, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1966, p. 14.

Bandyopadhyaya, on the other hand, maintains that the October Revolution was welcomed only by certain Muslims of India, that is the most backward, ignorant and fanatically religious section of Indian society, which was, besides, in the minority. Bandyopadhyaya writes that the Russian Revolution apparently produced a great impression by its substance and its priorities only on certain sects of Indian Muslims,[1] but he said he found practically none among the Hindus.[2]

In fact, that author described the Muslim affection for Bolshevism by the community of the principles of Islam and Socialism rather than by the appeal of the Bolshevik aspirations as such. With references to Islamic scholars, Bandyopadhyaya seeks to prove that the Koran proclaims the very same principles which have been subsequently borrowed from it by Communists. He preceded that argument by two more points: the especially friendly attitude of the Soviet Government to Muslims and the actual implementation by the Soviets of the right of nations to self-determination. Everything is right about these last points except one thing. The Soviet Government's attitude to all oppressed peoples of the East has always been equally friendly and never depended on their religious affiliation.

The argument about the ideological community of Socialism and Islam, now produced by individual bourgeois historians, in pursuit of their own self-seeking ambitions, just because the Koran contains certain elements of egalitarianism which, incidentally, are to be found in other creeds as well, is utterly baseless and hardly in need of any detailed refutation.[3] The reference based on this argument to the Muslims' predisposition to Socialism is disproved not only by the record of immigrant Indian revolutionaries in Soviet Russia, but also by the movement of revolutionaries from other, non-Muslim, countries of the East into Soviet Russia.

Representatives of the oppressed peoples were coming to Soviet Russia from all over the world because they wanted to see with their own eyes the land that had made the October Revolution and was now translating into practice

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[1] Ibid., p. 128.
[2] Ibid., p. 136.
[3] See Chapter II for more about the origin and meaning of this "Socialist" interpretation of Islam.

the great idea of the right of nations to self-determination and assisting the oppressed peoples of the East in their struggle for independence and freedom, and also to make a study of Russian revolutionary record so as to use it to save their own peoples from the scourge of colonialism.

The meaning of the pilgrimage of revolutionaries from the East into Soviet Russia was aptly summed up by a Chinese revolutionary democrat Qu Qiubo, one of the pioneers of the Communist movement in China. The Russian Revolution, he wrote in March 1920, "stirred the whole world and influenced the development of ideas in all countries. Everybody was eager to grasp the essence of that Revolution and to gain a closer insight into the culture of Russia—and so humanity's attention was riveted to Russia..." The same was taking place in China. "...In our country, too," he pointed out, "everybody took interest in Russia."[1] Qu Qiubo was one of those who strove with all the passion of a revolutionary to get to know the land that made the October Revolution, and strove for it. "It was my firm decision to go to Russia," he related subsequently (in 1921), "and I did not care how: if I could not have gone there as a correspondent, I would have pressed on to get there in a different way, regardless of all difficulties."[2] These words perfectly expressed the feelings and aspirations not only of the Chinese but of all revolutionary elements of the East.

In 1920, Qu Qiubo was the first of China's revolutionaries to arrive in Soviet Russia to blaze the trail for what soon became periodic visits of his fellow-thinkers to Moscow. This is how Qu Qiubo defined the object of his arrival: "...To devote myself entirely to a systematic study of theory and hard facts ... to study Communism, to history of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and Russian culture."[3] And, indeed, hundreds of revolutionaries coming to Soviet Russia from all over Asia wanted not only to see how Soviet government actually worked but also to study the theory that informed the October Revolution and the building of a new type of society.

The Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and the Comintern offered them such an op-

[1] Qu Qiubo, *Essays and Articles*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1959, p. 89 (Russ. ed.).
[2] Ibid., p. 45.
[3] Ibid., p. 51.

portunity. Courses to train not only Party workers of the Soviet East but also revolutionaries from Asian countries had been organised in Baku, Tashkent and under the auspices of the People's Commissariat for Nationalities in Moscow as early as 1920. The Communist University of Working People of the East was established in 1921. It had a student body of 622 by the end of that year, 933 in the following year, and 1,015 by early 1924. Almost one-third of those students were revolutionaries from the oppressed East—Indians, Chinese, Koreans, Persians, Turks, Arabs, and so on.[1]

The argument about the particular predisposition of Muslims for Socialism is disproved even more conclusively by the fact that thousands of Eastern nationals who had nothing to do with the Mohammedan religion, for instance, Chinese and Koreans, fought in the Civil War to defend Soviet government.

That is to say that the inflow of Indian revolutionaries into Soviet Russia had nothing extraordinary about it.

Organised Indian Émigrés in Soviet Russia

News of the October Revolution reached far-off India with amazing velocity and fetched a response in the shape of an incipient emigration of Indians into Soviet Russia. At first, from 1918 until early 1920, Indians were crossing into the Soviet Republic, driven, as a rule, by the sole idea of national liberation from British oppression. They turned to Soviet authorities for an answer to the question of how a revolution had to be made, and wanted to get practical aid in making one. Such people kept coming in subsequent months and even years, but it was not until mid-1920 that Indian national revolutionary democrats, some of whom were adopting the principles of Marxism-Leninism, began to arrive in Soviet Russia.

The emigration of many Indians into Soviet Russia expressed the urge of the most revolutionary forces of the national liberation movement of India for cooperation with the people that had set an example of a revolutionary solution of social problems. It is self-evident, Lenin said,

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[1] See: N. N. Timofeyeva, "The Communist University of Working People of the East", *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 2, 1976, pp. 49, 51, 52, 55, and also *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 5, 1979, p. 37.

that "this revolutionary movement of the peoples of the East can now develop effectively ... only in direct association with the revolutionary struggle of our Soviet Republic against international imperialism".[1] Indian revolutionaries were coming round to that idea in their own peculiar ways, sometimes intentionally and sometimes spontaneously, but they did come round to accepting it fast enough.

It was the so-called Provisional Government of India, established in Kabul, that was the first of the politically organised groups of Indian national revolutionaries to come into contact with the RSFSR. As early as November 29, 1917, the head of that centre, Mahendra Pratap, who had arrived on the Afghan-Soviet border, asked the Turkestan authorities for negotiations with the Government of the RSFSR. He pointed out in his message that he had twice tried to contact the Government of Russia, but all in vain.

Now, however, following the victory of the October Revolution, "the final obstacle has been removed, and I have been glad to find out from the latest newspapers appearing in India that the Russian Government is now led by the noble sons of Russia. English present them as traitors, but in actual fact they are true friends of humanity..." He went on to say that he was anxious to see "close friendly relations between Russia and India" because "*we trust that nothing but a partnership of Russia and India will make possible India's true liberation* and an equilibrium in the Universe..."[2] (My italics—*M. P.*).

Soviet Russia gave a generous welcome to Indian revolutionaries. Pratap wrote later on (in December 1921) that as early as February 1918 he arrived in Tashkent, at the invitation of the Turkestan authorities, and proceeded to Petrograd to be greeted by ranking representatives of the Soviet Government.[3] From then onwards and all through 1919, 1920 and 1921, some representatives of the Provisional Government of India stayed long and worked in various cities and regions of Soviet Russia, but principally in Tashkent, Bukhara, Moscow, and sometimes in Kazan.

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[1] V. I. Lenin, "Address to the Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East, November 22, 1919", *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, 1977, p. 151.

[2] Central State Military History Archives, s. 1396, r. 6, f. 234, pp. 131, 132.

[3] After his visit to Petrograd, Pratap left for Berlin.

Indian national revolutionaries, relying as they did on their connections with the Afghan Emir, who had given them permission to live in the Afghan capital for several years, strove to help burgeoning Soviet diplomacy in establishing friendly relations between the RSFSR and Afghanistan. That was perfectly in accord with their plans to liberate India and form an anti-imperialist Soviet-Afghan alliance to that end. It was Mohammad Barakatullah, who had arrived in Tashkent from Kabul early in 1919,[1] and Mahendra Pratap that were most active in that respect.

Mohammad Barakatullah, a member of the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress, professor of philosophy and literature, a former leader of the Ghadar Party, and until shortly a member of the Indian Revolutionary Committee in Berlin, and Prime Minister of the Provisional Government of India in exile, stayed in Soviet Russia also in his capacity as an unofficial representative of Afghanistan. He was received by V. I. Lenin on May 7, 1919. Soon afterwards, in a special note Barakatullah informed the People's Com-

[1] The date of Barakatullah's arrival needs to be clarified. Barakatullah himself declared: "In March 1919, with Habibullah assassinated and Amanullah, who hated the English, enthroned, I, one of the new Emir's most trusted agents, was sent to Moscow as Ambassador Extraordinary to establish permanent relations with Soviet Russia" (See: *Izvestia*, May 6, 1919, p. 1). Habibullah was murdered on February 21, and Amanullah-Khan got enthroned in the opening days of March. Consequently, Barakatullah, even if he had been dispatched to Moscow right afterwards, could not have found himself in Tashkent before mid- or late March, and in Moscow, before mid- or late April 1919. A. N. Heifets maintains, however, that Barakatullah left Afghanistan with an Afghan mission for Soviet Russia "not later than January 1919". (A. N. Heifets, *Soviet Russia and Neighbouring Eastern Countries. 1918-1920*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1964, pp. 271-272, in Russian), while G. L. Dmitriyev writes that Barakatullah was already in Tashkent in February (G. L. Dmitriyev, "From the History of Indian Revolutionary Organisations in Central Asia", *Transactions of Tashkent State University*, Issue 314, Tashkent University Press, Tashkent, 1967, p. 54, in Russian). The views of A. N. Heifets and G. L. Dmitriyev seem to corroborate the report (of January 27, 1919) of a Tashkent-based Revolutionary Committee of the Young Bukhara Party that "six representatives, led by Kasimbey, of the Turkish government and of Hindustan [Barakatullah], one of great scholars, have arrived in Bukhara from Afghanistan to unite the Bukhara government with the Soviet authorities and put up a barrier ["chain" in the text] to an attack by English capital..." (Party Archives of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic, s. 60, r. 1, f. 258, p. 5). Perhaps, the "great scholar" M. Barakatullah had left Kabul before the coup, and got the new Emir's go-ahead for negotiations with Moscow when he was already on his way there.

missariat for Foreign Affairs that Afghanistan was ready to conclude a defensive and offensive alliance with the Russian Republic.[1]

Mahendra Pratap was in Germany at the time, that is early in May 1919, where he had arrived from Petrograd some time before. When he heard of the outbreak of the Anglo-Afghan war on May 3, he made up his mind to proceed to Afghanistan, after a visit to Moscow, hoping, as he wrote to explain his decision, that "at this valuable opportunity, long desired for, I might be able to do ... for the millions of human beings inhabiting India *some solid service.*"[2]

In July,[3] Mahendra Pratap arrived in Moscow again in company of Abdur Rabb Barq and Prativadi Acharya. He reported that in the following way: "In Moscow we were welcomed by my honourable friend, Mohammad Barakatullah, hospitably entertained by the Foreign Office and kindly received by that great personage—Comrade Lenin."[4] (CPA IML).

During his visit to Moscow, Pratap must have been anxious, first and foremost, to organise a Soviet-Afghan march on India to liberate it. "What Germans could not do, I thought, will now be done by Soviet Russia and the new Afghanistan [which had proclaimed its independence].

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[1] See: A. N. Heifets, "Leninist Foreign Policy and the National Liberation Movement", *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 2, 1970, p. 51.

[2] See: Mahendra Pratap's letter of December 1921, to the Government of the RSFSR, "A Few Words Written in the Interest of Soviet Russia and India". (CPA IML.)

[3] In all probability, early in July 1919. In the same letter of December 1921, Pratap wrote that he had come to Moscow in the summer of 1919. Barakatullah in his written note, which was drawn up also in December 1921, specified the date of Pratap's arrival. He reported that Mahendra Pratap, Abdur Rabb Barq and Prativadi Acharya had been overtaken and passed on their way to Moscow by a fourth Indian revolutionary from Berlin—Dalip Singh Gill who had arrived in the Soviet capital in June, while Pratap and his companions turned up there two or three weeks later.

[4] Unfortunately, the precise date of that audience is not known but the odds are that the delegation of Indian revolutionaries, led by Pratap and comprising Abdur Rabb Barq, Prativadi Acharya, Dalip Singh Gill, Mohammad Barakatullah and Ibrahim, a Punjab peasant, was received by Lenin soon after Pratap's arrival in Moscow, that is, in July. Naturally, the date of May 7 that occurs in some publications (notably, in one by this writer—see: *The Comintern and the East*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1981, p. 55) refers only to V. I. Lenin's audience for Barakatullah since there were no more Indians in Moscow at the time as yet.

Freedom of the one-fifth of mankind appeared very near." (CPA IML).

Yet another thing Pratap sought to obtain in the course of his Moscow negotiations was an official recognition of his "government" in Kabul by the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, and he believed he would be received as President of the Indian Republic. However, the Soviet authorities could not, naturally, recognise the Kabul-based Provisional Government of India and regard it as the sole leader of India's revolutionary forces.

Replying to Pratap, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs explained its position in the following way: first, it was not on Indian territory that the government had been formed and existed, second, it had not officially announced its formation, and, third, it did not have the support of a fairly large cross-section of revolutionary opinion. I think this is how one should interpret the reply of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs about a "readiness to acknowledge as legitimate any provisional Indian government established by Indian revolutionaries on ... Indian territory, on the sole understanding that this government should have the backing of revolutionary forces and announce ... its formation."[1] For Moscow to have recognised the Pratap government would, besides, have been a disloyal act in respect of many other Indian revolutionary groups in India proper and beyond her confines because none of them had ever elected the Kabul centre as their representative body.[2]

One should not forget that Indian revolutionaries at the Kabul centre were still building their tactics on conspiratorial principles, ignoring revolutionary mass work, and held an invasion of India by armies of neighbouring states to be the chief means of liberating her from British colonialists. The Soviet Government could not countenance such an approach. As Lenin insisted, it was only a national revolution with full-scale and self-sacrificing involvement of the masses that could win out. Nevertheless,

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[1] Quoted from: G. L. Dmitriyev, "From the History of Indian Revolutionary Organisations in Central Asia", p. 54.

[2] The Soviet Plenipotentiary in Afghanistan, Ya. Z. Surits wrote on February 11, 1920 to the Turkestan Commission in Tashkent that the Provisional Government of India was trying to prove to him that it had the right of undivided leadership of the Indian revolution.

the Kabul centre pressed hard for an official Soviet recognition.

A special mission of the emigrant government, comprising Mohammad Ali, Assistant Minister for the Interior, and Mohammad Shafiq (Secretary of the same Ministry) arrived in Tashkent on March 31, 1920.[1] It was later joined by Ibrahim and Abdul Majid. Those men, with Barakatullah at their head, were usually called a Provisional Government group. (CPA IML).

Ali and Shafiq wrote to various Soviet bodies and, in their messages and reports, set out the history of the establishment of the Kabul centre, described its composition and the work it had done, and defined its ultimate objectives. In a letter mailed to the Turkestan Commission of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee in the first half of April 1920, Mohammad Ali stated two requests—one "for acceptance of our cooperation in the common liberation of India" (a most characteristic request to show the banking on India's liberation from without) and the other for "the recognition of our Provisional Government by the Turkestan Commission". (CPA IML.)

There was, besides, a report drawn up in the form of questions and answers. It is, perhaps, one of the greatest interest for it offered a fuller account of the sum and substance of the views that particular group of Indian revolutionaries held by early 1920. In another document, Ali and Shafiq reported that they had relevant questions put to them still in Kabul by Ya. Z. Surits, Soviet Plenipotentiary in Afghanistan.[2] That document, dated April 10, 1920, was also sent to the Turkestan Commission. One of the questions was: "What is the object of the Provisional Government?" The object was, said the reply, "to create an indigenous Government in India instead of the present alien English Government. The Provisional Government will ... cease to exist in the sense that it will hand over its portfolio to the body-politic of India formulated by the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League, the two well-known representative bodies of India".

The authors then passed on to a detailed definition of

[1] "Introduction" ("Official Representation') of the Provisional Government of India to the Soviet Authorities in Moscow of July 18, 1920.

[2] October Revolution Central State Archives (ORCSA), s. 5402, r. 1, f. 486, p. 4.

the methods by which they planned to attain that target: "To accomplish this our object, we have adopted the following line of action:

"1. To invoke the sympathy and moral support of foreign Governments for the emancipation of India from the foreign yoke.

"2. To disseminate revolutionary propaganda among:

"a) the Princes and ruling chiefs of India by inviting them to join our cause,

"b) leaders of public opinion and captains of industry, and

"c) the Indian soldiers, dissuading them from fighting against any foreign power.

"3. To obtain arms and ammunition with a view to supply the revolutionary forces and to store them for emergencies, that is the general War of Independence."[1]

It is noteworthy that Indian revolutionaries still excluded the working class and the peasantry from those among whom revolutionary propaganda had to be conducted and, consequently, did not consider them to be the driving force of the liberation struggle. Nor can one overlook the fact that this document has no mention of a popular uprising or revolution, nothing beyond a reference to "emergencies, that is the general War of Independence". Naturally, that was not a casual omission. The major banking, as already stated, was on an invasion by a foreign army. In fact, it is for that reason that point "c" of the second paragraph called for Indian soldiers to be dissuaded from fighting against any foreign Power that would assume the mission of liberating India by force of arms. Once the liberating Power had driven out the British imperialists, it would hand power over to a Provisional Government. But to make it easier for that government to organise the running of the country, it was necessary, already at that juncture, to win over the top crust of Indian society which was at the service of the British colonial administration.

Even these few lines just quoted suggest what particular outside force the Kabul group of Indian revolutionaries counted on. The rest of the text serves to bear it out. Replying to the question, "What relations will the Provisional Government have with Soviet Russia?", the authors wrote:

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[1] "A Short Account of the History of the Indian Revolutionary Committee". (See: ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 486, pp. 1-2.)

"The Provisional Government expects to have the same relations with Soviet Russia as Denikin's and Kolchak's Governments have with the Entente, that is to say, Provisional Government hopes that Soviet Russia will help it carry on War against the English in India". Further, with a rather loose interpretation of the anti-imperialist essence of the Soviet State power, they went on to explain that "the Provisional Government is ready to cooperate with Soviet Russia in carrying out the item of its programme as regards the liberation of India".[1]

The Kabul revolutionaries must have had the following line of reasoning. Since the Soviet Government had not only proclaimed the right of nations to self-determination, but was lending actual assistance to oppressed peoples in their struggle for freedom and independence, one could, apparently, do without a popular revolution and have Soviet Russia bear the brunt of military expulsion of the English from India. The subsequent text made it clear that the Provisional Government proposed to set up its standing army of invasion at a later date,[2] but, probably, it was not that army that it wanted to play the key part in the nation's immediate liberation.

More evidence to this effect can be found in other pronouncements by spokesmen of the Provisional Government. For example, Mohammad Shafiq, speaking before a plenary session of the Council for International Propaganda on May 11, 1920, called on "all the sons of the East—Persians, Bukharans, Russians, Turks, Afghans to unite to liberate India from the British yoke".[3] What he meant was not just aid to an Indian popular uprising, but nothing short of organising a march of liberation from without. That was also the idea of Barakatullah. Mustafa Subhi, the leader of the early Turkish Communists, even reproached him with having preached in his speeches to former Turkish prisoners of war that "the native [that is, Eastern] detachments, organised by the Soviet authorities, were designed ... for ... a holy war" to liberate Afghanistan, India and Turkey from imperialist oppression.[4]

All the foregoing does not, however, provide a full picture of the political outlook of Kabul-based Indian national

[1] Ibid.
[2] Ibid.
[3] CPA IML, s. 514, r. 1, f. 4.
[4] CPA IML, s. 17, r. 65, f. 399, p. 12.

revolutionaries. Thanks to Professor Barakatullah and his outstanding propaganda work in Soviet Russia, we have come into possession of substantive material permitting a closer insight into the matter at issue.

Barakatullah clearly realised that the success or defeat of the Soviet system in the Civil War was fundamental to the success or defeat of many peoples of the East, including the peoples of India, in battle for their national liberation. Therefore, as a true revolutionary, he offered his services to the Soviet Government to conduct propaganda, both in print and by word, among the Muslim population of the RSFSR as well as among the former Turkish POWs who were staying on Soviet territory. The offer was gratefully accepted.

Nariman Narimanov,[1] who was in charge of the Middle East Department of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, related in November 1919: "Barakatullah was sent to the Volga Region, in company of a veteran worker, Izmailov, to carry on propaganda ... with a view to rising against British imperialism. The object was ... to inform the mass of the Muslims about the state of things in the East... The Muslims had to be roused to united action."[2]

Late in September or very early in October 1919, Barakatullah set out for a long propaganda tour of Volga towns to return to Moscow only early January 1920.[3] Barakatullah visited Kazan, Ufa, Samara, Sterlitamak and many other places. In the second half of 1920, he made a similar propaganda tour of the Trans-Caspian Region.[4] Barakatul-

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[1] Nariman Narimanov (1870-1925)—prominent Soviet statesman and Party worker, one of active executants of the policy of the Comintern and the Russian Communist Party in the East. For more about him see, in particular: M. P. Pavlovich, *The East in Battle for Independence*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1980, pp. 95-97; *Historical Encyclopaedia*, Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya Publishers, Vol. 9, Moscow, 1966, p. 907 (both in Russian).

[2] CPA IML, s. 583, r. 1, f. 5, p. 81.

[3] In a letter to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, he wrote: "They sent me out of Moscow ... on the eve of Afghan envoy's arrival in Moscow". The envoy arrived on October 10, 1919, however, and so he could have left either late in September or early in October 1919. The letter to the RCP(B) Central Committee was written straight after his return to Moscow and dated January 6, 1920. Consequently, in all probability, he returned to the capital late in December 1919, or in the opening days of January 1920 (CPA IML, s. 17, r. 65, f. 487, p. 42).

[4] CPA IML, s. 17, r. 65, f. 400, p. 6.

lah spoke at conferences and meetings and in mosques and made fiery speeches to expose the predatory policy of the Entente, above all, of British imperialism, and urged the Muslims to take part in the Civil War on the Soviet side. Here is one of his proclamation speeches "To My Turkish Brethren in Captivity", made in Kazan on October 20, 1919: "Heroes of war, defenders of sacred Islam, brothers in religion, my Turkish brothers!... Ten months have passed since the Turkish government had to sign an armistice agreement with England, France and Italy. Enemies of Islam promised a peace based on right and justice. ...But after the capture of the Dardanelles ... they began to occupy Turkey and carve it up." Having described, further on, the origin of the Kemalist liberation movement to resist the invaders in Anatolia, Barakatullah went on to say: "The Soviet authorities of Russia are fighting the English and the French and, to this end, they want to act united with the Turkish nation... The Soviet authorities want to liberate both Russia and Turkey from grabbing hands... Turkish brothers ... we expect you to act with self-sacrifice. Come along, get together, organise all Turkish detachments... and, on a war march, drive out the rapacious enemies who have trampled under foot your freedom and business..."[1]

In his appeals to the Muslim population of Soviet Russia, Barakatullah used a different language: "Comrades! English, French and American capitalists have brought under their control the capital of the Muslim world—Constantinople, and their guns have destroyed the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. They support the Russian counter-revolution with money and weapons, and want to kill all life in Soviet Russia with a blockade. Comrade Muslims! Remember that it is your moral duty to act in common with the Soviet authorities, for if they fall, you will lose the last hope for the liberation of the East and the whole world. Join the Red Army as it is fighting for your liberation and your interests."[2]

Barakatullah's articles, speeches and interviews were printed predominantly in newspapers for the Muslim population in Petrograd, Alma-Ata, Kazan, Samara, Tashkent, and, probably, elsewhere. We know of his articles

[1] CPA IML, s. 17, r. 65, f. 399, p. 13.
[2] *Izvestia*, Tashkent, February 12, 1920, p. 2.

"Wilson vs. Lenin",[1] "Bolshevik Ideas and the Islamic Republic",[2] and appeal "To All the Muslims of Asia",[3] "Oriental Policy"[4] and, finally, the pamphlet "Bolshevism and Islam" which found its way into India much to the dismay of British colonialists.[5]

Confirmed Muslim, Barakatullah sought to prove that the main propositions of Communism and of Islam and other religious doctrines were identical and consisted in enunciating the ideas of the liberty, equality and fraternity of all men. Both Marxism and all religions, he wrote in his article "Bolshevik Ideas and the Islamic Republic", had been "handed down by the Lord in order to save the poor and the needy, reassure all men and bring peoples into kinship with each other". Barakatullah saw those very ideas translated into reality by Soviet government. "The ideas of Socialism which had become Plato's sacred dream two thousand years ago, have now been put into practice by the efforts of Mister Ulyanov-Lenin. Thanks to that, power in Russia and Turkestan has passed into the hands of workers, peasants, and soldiers. Religious and national strife has been ended. All people have obtained freedom, and have been declared equal."[6] In another article—the appeal "To All Muslims of Asia", he pointed out: "There is no state on Earth today that would not be drawing a lesson for itself from the Bolshevik principle that all human beings are equal."[7]

Not always aware of the fierce class struggle which led to the power of the workers, peasants and soldiers being established in Russia, Barakatullah hold the Civil War to be nothing but a struggle against foreign invaders and the hated English and other imperialists, and saw its whole point in that. Therefore, he called on the peoples of the East to realise that "Socialism is good for them" and that they must "defend it ... and must join forces with the Bolshevik contingents and drive the English usurpers out of their countries".[8]

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[1] *Izvestia*, Alma-Ata, March 25, April 1, April 8, 1920.
[2] *Istiraquiun*, Tashkent, April 16, 1919.
[3] Ibid., November 11, 1919.
[4] Ibid., November 4, 1919.
[5] See: L. V. Mitrokhin, *India on Lenin...*, pp. 79-80.
[6] *Istiraquiun*, April 16, 1919.
[7] *Istiraquiun*, November 11, 1919.
[8] *Istiraquiun*, April 16, 1919.

Barakatullah made the interesting point that the October Revolution changed the essence of the old "Eastern question" for the first time by turning it from one of the partition and plunder of the nations of Asia into one of their complete liberation. In his article "Oriental Policy", he wrote: "The question of the liberation of the East has been brought up before us as a major and independent one by the Great Revolution in Russia. And even if that revolution had given nothing more to the peoples of Asia, this new way of posing that problem would alone have tremendous importance for the oppressed East."[1]

While considering Socialism as a purely egalitarian doctrine, Barakatullah declared for the abolition of private property as it was "the cause of all evil on Earth". He believed that, given the national public ownership of the land, houses and factories, "all products made by every man must become a public asset" and everyone "will be able to take whatever he may need from a public storehouse". Buying and selling were to be ruled out altogether. "With things done in this way," Barakatullah concluded, "men will have got rid of poverty and hunger, and will have achieved liberty, equality, fraternity and prosperity."[2]

In visualising that kind of social order, Barakatullah did not propose any methods by which to bring it about, that is to say, he did no better than wishing. In any case, Barakatullah proclaimed no ideas of scientific Socialism. In fact, Barakatullah made no secret of his political affiliation and said in no uncertain terms that he supported Soviet government for its struggle against imperialism and against domination of the East by European capitalism. He passionately urged the Muslims of the whole world: "Unite round Soviet government, for the liberation of all oppressed, subject peoples depends only on this Soviet government."[3]

In an interview for *Izvestia*, Barakatullah declared: "I am not a Communist, nor a Socialist ... but my political programme so far is to drive the English out of Asia. *I am an uncompromising enemy of European capitalism in Asia*, as represented by the English, above all. *In this sense*,

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[1] *Istiraquiun*, November 4, 1919.
[2] *Istiraquiun*, April 16, 1919.
[3] *Rabochaya Gazeta Molot*, Baku, August 14, 1919, p. 2.

I come close to Communists, and in this respect, we are your natural allies" [Italics added—*M. P.*].[1]

In his articles, Barakatullah rose to sharp criticism of the bourgeois democratic system which most of Indian revolutionaries had, until quite recently, seen as an ideal to strive for. On British Parliament, he said that it was "like a children's toy made to dupe the people", and that the right to be elected actually belonged to the propertied classes only, while "labour and workers have been fighting for their rights for six hundred years, but cannot get rid of oppression".[2]

Under the impact of the October Revolution, the views of the Kabul-based Indian revolutionaries changed appreciably. First, Indian revolutionaries began to exult in the Russian Revolution and saw its sense and meaning in that it had mooted the question of the liberation of Eastern nations for the first time, settled it on its own territory, and brought nearer the possibility of resolving it on an international scale. As to the social essence of the October Revolution, they understood it very inaccurately, considering the achievement of liberty, equality and fraternity to be the gist of Socialist change. Second, they had come to realise the necessity of a close alliance of the national liberation movement with Soviet Russia to achieve the independence of the Eastern countries. Third, they had become far more resolute in exposing the vices of the bourgeois democratic system and intensified the preaching of egalitarian Socialism on religious grounds.

Along with these undoubtedly positive changes in the system of views of the Kabul-based Indian national revolutionaries, certain essential points of what had been their earlier philosophies were retained and even emphasised. Above all, there was the increased belief in the expediency of conspiratorial tactics coupled with a virtual refusal to prepare a popular revolution. Petty-bourgeois revolutionaries inside the Provisional Government still stood aloof from the mass of the people, particularly, from the working class. The mounting unrest of India's proletariat and peasants must have kept them at bay. They greeted the October Revolution as the event that would give them an opportunity to secure India's freedom without mass action,

[1] *Izvestia*, May 6, 1919, p. 1.
[2] *Istiraquiun*, April 16, 1919.

without a popular revolution, but only with the help of Soviet Russia's armies of liberation.

The Barakatullah group in Tashkent evolved leftward. That was due to the influence of the Russian revolutionary realities and Communist propaganda work which was carried on in Turkestan by the Council for International Propaganda (Sovinterprop) among thousands of ethnic Persians, Turks and Chinese and a still small number of Indians who had crossed the Hindu Kush.[1]

Sovinterprop gave much attention to the Indian revolutionaries who had arrived in Tashkent. At its opening session of December 30, 1919, it examined a message from Soviet Consul in Kabul N. Z. Bravin who announced the expected arrival in Tashkent of five Indian national revolutionaries who "have expressed a desire to work [in Turkestan] ... for a revolutionary uprising in India and for [her] liberation from the English bondage".[2] The Council wanted Barakatullah's opinion about those individuals. Late in February 1920, five men (Hoja Suleiman, Adbul Fazil Khan, Ghulam Mohammad Khan, Faizi, the fifth one was not named) were already in Tashkent,[3] and a mission of the Provisional Government (Mohammad Ali and Mohammad Shafiq) arrived there on March 31, to be joined shortly afterwards by Abdul Majid and Ibrahim, who had accompanied Barakatullah on his visit to Moscow.

A session of the Executive Bureau of Sovinterprop on April 5 decided to organise a "Hindu Communist section".[4] On April 17, Sovinterprop complemented the five national sections already under its direction (Persian, Turkish, Bukharan, Khivan, and Chinese) by forming an Indian Section of a few Indian revolutionaries, and on April 23 or 27 had it officially confirmed at its session.[5] True, the Section never became a Communist organisation, but it did take certain steps in this direction.

[1] See Chapter II for more on Bolshevik work among Oriental nationals.

[2] Central State Archives of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic, s. 17, r. 1, f. 1219, p. 159; CPA IML, s. 544, r. 1, f. 1, p. 1.

[3] CPA IML, s. 514, r. 1, f. 2, pages not marked.

[4] Ibid.

[5] CPA IML, s. 514, r. 1, f. 1, p. 19. In a letter of July 22, 1920 to Sovinterprop, Abdul Majid maintained that the Section consisted of seven men. The Sovinterprop plenipotentiary delegate M. Shulman reported on December 1, 1920 that "the Indian Section has been formed of four revolutionaries". (CPA IML.) Perhaps, Shulman referred to the original nucleus.

Once established as a section of Sovinterprop, that is having accepted its leadership, the Indian group made itself heard as early as April 20 by producing a new policy document signed by Mohammad Ali and Mohammad Shafiq.[1] That was an interesting, though still immature and eclectic document. It contained earlier, though low-key, propositions regarding conspiratorial tactics and individual acts of terrorism superimposed with new, still hardly realised notions about Communism, about work among peasants and workers, and about a Soviet type of government in India.

Its opening part, which we may call "The Plan and Programme of the Indian Section", since it has no proper title of its own, showed an attempt to explain the failure of the Indian people's revolutionary risings in 1919, and draw proper lessons from that defeat. "The reason behind the setback in the recent struggle," the document says, "was that none but a fraction of Indian soldiers had joined it. Therefore, Indian revolutionaries have now focussed their attention on nationalist propaganda among the ranks." (CPA IML.)

Earlier on, it was considered sufficient to conduct explanation work principally among the command personnel, while now Indian revolutionaries were talking about the need for such work to be carried on among the ranks, first and foremost. That was certainly a step forward. Further on, the authors of the "Plan and Programme" spoke of the propaganda of Communism, although they saw it, essentially, as a means by which to achieve national independence. They wrote: "If ... the propaganda of Communism or Bolshevism ... is systematically conducted by Indian revolutionary communities abroad, soldiers and workers of India will rise against British exploiters." Next came a still more definite instruction: "Disseminate propaganda among Indian soldiers, workers and peasants,

[1] It is not clear who was the Chairman of the Section. The minutes of the session of the Executive Bureau of Sovinterprop of April 5, 1920 mentioned Abdul Fazil as the chief of the prospective section (CPA IML, s. 544, r. 1, f. 2). In his letter of July 22, 1920 to Sovinterprop, Abdul Majid, reporting on the work the Section had done, called himself its Chairman. G. L. Dmitriyev contends that it was Mohammad Ali who was Chairman of the Section (see his article "From the History of Indian Revolutionary Organisations in Central Asia", p. 58).

explaining to them that they are in foreign bondage... We shall call on them to cast off the yoke of foreign masters and enjoy in freedom the fruit of their own labour in their own happy homeland." (CPA IML). The document referred to "workers" and "peasants" but, quite naturally, still invariably placed emphasis on soldiers, treating them as the major force of the revolution.

In setting out the tasks before the workers, the authors imbued them with some of their former ideas of individual terrorism: "The workers must get weapons and bombs, apart from money and literature, in order to terrorise the British despots, get rid of their influence and make the revolution more effective." Further on, the document says: "To carry out our intentions and advance the Indian revolution, we shall organise an Indian Committee in Tashkent to be known as 'Indian Democrats'."

Another chapter "Principles", announced, now on behalf of this Committee, that "all of its members... have adopted the principles of Communism", and the concluding chapter, "Programme", proclaimed three major targets of the revolution: (1) abolition of foreign rule; (2) "overthrow of certain Indian autocrats", and big landowners and factory owners, "oppressing the people", and (3) "establishment of a Soviet Republic in India".

Naturally, one has to treat the Communistic pronouncements of that group with great caution, for it is hard to believe that the very same Mohammad Ali and Mohammad Shafiq, who had presented their report to the Turkestan Commission of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on April 10, having quite definitely expressed the national revolutionary views of the Provisional Government, could have accepted Communist principles barely ten days after.

Sovinterprop representative M. Shulman, who had long worked with Indian revolutionaries, had this to say about Mohammad Ali and Mohammad Shafiq in his letter of December 1, 1920: "These two are very little familiar with the Indian working-class movement, and furthermore, they take very little interest in it. Their only desire is to defeat the enemies—the English... The principles of Soviet system of government and Communism clashed, no doubt, with their general world outlook." This appears to have been just the case at the time. Indian revolutionaries could not yet grasp the Communist principles in full. The time had not yet come for it, and the revolutionaries themselves,

honest fighters against British rule, were not yet prepared for it. It would have been surprising if those men had digested Communist ideology in the space of a few days they stayed in Soviet Turkestan.

The document just reviewed serves to confirm, however, that its authors held more radical views than ever before on the general democratic struggle to end British rule. Now their views implied not only the achievement of India's full national independence, but a restriction of biggest capitalists and feudals in an independent country. Therefore, the authors showed they saw that the problem of their country's liberation was linked up with that of granting the social demands of the working people. The document proved that Lenin was right in regarding Soviets as possible institutions for the pre-capitalist setting of the East, though not, naturally, as vehicles of proletarian dictatorship, and that idea was widely popular among the revolutionaries of Asian countries.

Besides, it may be presumed that the group of national revolutionaries who worked out the document we have now considered showed a sincere desire to fathom the meaning of Communism and move closer to it. It was hardly casual that some members of that Indian group, notably Mohammad Ali,[1] should, indeed, have subsequently become Communists and done quite a lot towards creating a Communist party in India. The devotion of Ibrahim, the peasant, to the ideas of Socialism and of the liberation of India, was highly appreciated by the Sovinterprop staff.

What goes to the credit of this group of Indian national revolutionaries is their earnest desire to defend Soviet government against the abuses of British imperialism. In their "Plan and Programme", they declared that they "consider it their duty ... to refute the false information spread

[1] Mohammad Ali became a prominent organiser of the Indian Communist movement while in exile as well as in India. For several years since 1922, he was in charge of the European Bureau of Indian Communists, and in 1925 he was managing editor of *The Masses*, organ of the Indian Communist Party. Later on, Mohammad Ali passed over to underground revolutionary work in India. He was arrested and convicted in the anti-Communist and anti-labour trial known as the Meerut Conspiracy Case, which went on from 1929 till 1933. After serving his sentence, he emigrated to France and was shot by Nazis during the Second World War. (See: Muzaffar Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India and its Formation Abroad*, National Book Agency Private Ltd., Calcutta, 1962).

by British imperialists about Bolshevik atrocities in Turkestan, a red menace in India, and about the destruction of all forms of civilisation by the Bolsheviks".

The Indians closed by thanking the Soviet Government for permission to establish an Indian community in Tashkent and for assistance in organising its activities for the liberation of India.

The Indians did carry on certain work, indeed. They sent their agitators to Baku and Persia to work among the Anglo-Indian troops and to the Pamirs for work among the local population. The section produced propaganda material such as: "What Soviet Power Is Like" (pamphlet), "To the Indian Brothers" (Appeal) and "The Republic and Islam" (this must have been Barakatullah's pamphlet "The Soviet Republic and Islam" or "Bolshevism and Islam"). Besides, the Section decided to publish a weekly newspaper, *Zamindar*. On April 23, the Council for International Propaganda, having heard a "Progress Report of the Indian Section", resolved "to give permission for an Indian revolutionary publication to be organised on an interim basis". The paper came off the press in two languages—Urdu and Persian—as early as May 1, 1920. Unfortunately, no more issues followed. The leading article, which had been by Mohammad Shafiq, set forth the paper's priorities. The editors proposed to draw the attention of the Soviet Republic to the Indian question and systematically explain its tremendous importance, to prove that the liberation of all subject nations depended on the abolition of colonialism in India, first and foremost. The paper intended to work for rallying the various revolutionary forces of Asia round one centre and a common programme, popularise the meaning and significance of the October Revolution, prepare the Indian proletariat for its historic mission, and counter the anti-Communist propaganda of British imperialism.[1] Some parts of that programme clearly betrayed nationalistic aberrations which was even more conspicuous in the documents of another group of Indian revolutionaries: the Indian Revolutionary Association.

Twenty-eight Indian national revolutionaries arrived in Tashkent on July 2, 1920, from Kabul. That was not just a group of disconnected people, but a fraction of an

[1] See: Abdul Majid's letter of July 22, 1920 to the Council for International Propaganda.

organisation which had established itself as the Indian Revolutionary Association.[1]

It was given a solemn and cordial welcome by numerous representatives of the city's working people, public organisations, the Soviet authorities and the Red Army. Speeches were made by Valerian Kuibyshev, Deputy Chairman of the Commission on Turkestan Affairs of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, and Mikhail Frunze, Commander of the Turkestan Front. The Chairman of the Association, Abdur Rabb Barq,[2] spoke in reply. He thanked everybody for the warm welcome which had surpassed all his expectations and those of his mates.[3]

The Association was created by Abdur Rabb Barq and Prativadi Acharya in Kabul at the very end of December 1919, or in January 1920, soon after they, and also Mahendra Pratap, had arrived in the Afghan capital from Moscow together with the first Soviet legation led by Ya. Z. Surits. For five months, the Association had worked among the Indian émigrés in Kabul, and during that period, its membership had expanded to just about a hundred and fifty. That means that it was one-fifth of the total that arrived in Tashkent which was not so few at all, considering the difficulties of travel at the time. There had been four or

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[1] See: *Izvestia*, Tashkent, July 4, 1920, p. 2.

[2] Abdur Rabb Barq (born in 1875, died, apparently, in the 60s in Turkey), put it down in a questionnaire that he came from an intellectual family. He served with the Foreign and Political Department of England, and worked for the British Consular Office in Baghdad and later on in Constantinople. As he said, he had started his revolutionary career in 1893 when he began to conduct anti-British propaganda in Indian forces stationed in Mesopotamia. In 1908, he emigrated from India. For three years (probably, during World War I), he served with the Turkish Army and so participated in the struggle against British imperialism. At the end of the war, he arrived in Berlin to join the Indian Revolutionary Committee. In 1919, he, together with Acharya and Pratap, came to Moscow. With a group of Indian revolutionaries he met Lenin. Later that year he went to Kabul where he stayed until early June 1920. After being received by Lenin for the second time, in February 1921, he drew up a list, at his request, of most serious books on the Indian national liberation movement. A talented orator, he spoke many Oriental and two European languages. Those who met him noted his excessive ambition. (See: *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol. I, p. 17; Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and Communist Party of India*, p. 56; Devendra Kaushik, "Indian Revolutionaries in Soviet Asia", *Link*, January 26, 1966.)

[3] *Izvestia*, Tashkent, July 4, 1920, p. 2.

five general membership meetings in Kabul to discuss and endorse action plans, and elect the leadership of the Association: Abdur Rabb Barq as Chairman, Prativadi Acharya as his Deputy, Amin Farukh and Fazil Al Qadir as Secretaries. The Constitution, which formulated the purposes and structural principles of the Association, had also been drawn up in Kabul.

It must have been at its second meeting on February 17 that the Association adopted its famous message of greetings to V. I. Lenin in which it thanked Soviet Russia for her struggle for the liberation of all the oppressed nations, notably India.[1] Lenin is known to have replied by expressing his joy over the fact that the principles of self-determination and liberation of subject peoples, proclaimed by the workers' and peasants' republic, had fetched so eager a response from politically concious Indians.[2]

The Indian Revolutionary Association proposed to carry on its work in Afghanistan but in May 1920, the Emir deprived it of the right of asylum. It was at that moment that the most active group of the Association availed itself of the hospitality of the Soviet Government. Incidentally, close contact with Soviet Russia had been contemplated even before they fell out with the Emir. The Constitution of the Association stated that its representative office "will be established in Tashkent so as to provide good information for European and, more particularly, Russian public opinion about the conditions of India under British rule".

The Association grouped markedly different individuals both in terms of their cultural and political education and their social background, but they were all united by a common desire to deliver their native land from British domination.

Alexander Tivel of the Council for International Propaganda, who was subsequently chief of the Organising Department of the Comintern's Turkestan Bureau, wrote in a report about the Association that about a dozen of the men who had come to Tashkent had deserted the British Army and that "deserters are, in most cases, revolutionaries only potentially. Yet their hatred of the English is strong enough". In his opinion, the group had "as many petty tradesmen and artisans", that is also about a dozen.

[1] *Izvestia*, Tashkent, April 17, 1920, p. 1.

[2] V. I. Lenin, "To the Indian Revolutionary Association", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, 1974, p. 138.

What can such a classification mean? Apparently, the deserters mostly came of peasant stock. Among the arrivals there were two brothers, Nasirkhan, chiefs of independent Baluchi tribes. In 1917-1918, they led a 10,000-strong rebel army. The English succeeded in suppressing the heroic resistance of the tribes when their ammunition had run out.

All the members of the Association, except Acharya, were Muslims, and many of them were illiterate. Yet, some were highly educated persons, such as, above all, Abdur Rabb Barq and Prativadi Acharya, and students—Amin Farukh and Fazil Al Qadir. True, good education did not prevent Abdur Rabb Barq from asserting that "there is no other way, except Islam, to save and pacify the world". That was, at least, what Mohammad Shafiq wrote about him subsequently. All Soviet people coming into contact with Indians related that the order that had been established within the Association through its chairman's fault was rather undemocratic, some spoke even of Adbur Rabb Barq's dictatorial tendencies. (CPA IML.)

"The Political Programme of the Indian Revolutionary Association",[1] bearing the signature of Abdur Rabb Barq, appeared on August 13, 1920, which, combined with some other material, made it possible to identify the views of that group of Indian national revolutionaries. It sketched out, unequivocally and clearly, the Association's supreme objective: "To destroy the galling foreign yoke and to establish in its place an independent self-government." Monarchy was categorically ruled out as a prospect for liberated India. When the time came, and if that would be consistent with the prevalent conditions in the country, there would be established a Soviet Federal Republic. "To achieve this end the Association shall try to gather and utilise all those forces within India or outside it which may ultimately lead to the destruction of the present most tyrannical foreign domination".

Elaborating on this argument about the forces of liberation in and outside the country, the authors of the document fairly clearly demonstrated their nationalism and their inflated notion of the role and significance of India for the rest of the world. "The Indian question", the Programme said, "is not national, it is an international question

[1] CPA IML.

of tremendous importance..."[1] Having rightfully emphasised the great international significance of the liberation of India, the authors still overplayed it by claiming that the question was not national at all, but a global, international one.

In his policy letter of August 22, 1920 to the Council for International Propaganda Abdur Rabb Barq said: the fact is that "India and India alone is the prop and mainstay of the first Capitalistic and Imperialistic Empire in the world; and when that prop is removed from under that Empire, the whole structure would fall down and shatter to pieces like a house of cards."

The idea of India's world-wide importance was played up in the Declaration of the Indian Revolutionary Association at the First Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku. "India and India alone," it said, "is the true reason of unrest and turmoil throughout the world. History has provided enough evidence to prove that the freedom of India means the freedom of the whole world and an end to all wars in the future."[2] Incidentally, all the seven delegates from the Indian Revolutionary Association to the First Congress of the Peoples of the East (there were 14 Indian delegates altogether),[3] when offered to fill in a special questionnaire, wrote exactly the same thing in reply to "What questions do you have to raise at the Congress?": "I intend to speak so as to prove that the freedom of the world depends on the freedom of India and move an appropriate resolution calling for my country's liberation."[4] In his letter to Sovinterprop, Abdur Rabb Barq, as if summing up, pointed out that the cause of the Indian people was the cause of all humanity. Indian revolutionaries tried to justify that argument by saying that "India is a unique seat of poverty and rightlessness in the whole world" and that the British Government, that enemy of all humanity, "can harbour its designs for attacking other nations" just because it possesses "such an inexhaustible source of human material as the multi-million-strong India".[5]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] *Kommunist*, Baku, September 9, 1920.

[3] See *Izvestia*, Tashkent, September 14, 1920, p. 2; *First Congress of the Peoples of the East*, Verbatim Report, Comintern Publishing House, Petrograd, 1920, p. 5 (in Russian).

[4] CPA IML, s. 544, r. 2, f. 40 and also f. 42.

[5] *Kommunist*, Baku, September 9, 1920.

While overplaying India's international importance, the Association sought to prove that the liberation of India was the cause of all the peoples of the world. "It is the duty of the Association," the Political Programme said, "to appeal to all the nations of the world, whether oppressed or free, in order to interest them and to induce them to take active part in the liberation of India; by so doing they will not have served their own interest alone but it will also be a great service to humanity at large."[1]

Members of the Association and some other Indian national revolutionaries considered that India must be liberated by Soviet Russia with support from independent borderland tribes. An Indian delegate to the First Congress of the Peoples of the East (unfortunately, his name was not mentioned) said in an interview for the *Kommunist* newspaper that "if Soviet Russia enters into contact with those tribes, the revolution in India will have the solid support of brave and freedom-loving highlanders accustomed to mountain warfare".[2]

As it counted on nothing short of an armed liberation of India by an outside force, the Indian Revolutionary Association failed to understand and, therefore, belittled the role of mass propaganda and organisation. One of the Association's two secretaries, Amin Farukh, said later on (June 22, 1921) that "the Association did not believe in propaganda but held that the only thing required was active work" which, he claimed, the Soviet Government did not support. (CPA IML.)

It is quite clear that the Soviet Government could not accept the idea of a reckless military crusade which was to have replaced the Indian revolution. While dreaming of their country's liberation with the help of an outside force, the Association's members strove to prevent the propagation of the principles of atheist Communism in India. Perhaps, it is precisely for this reason that the Association stressed in its Declaration at the First Congress of the Peoples of the East that "all the revolutionaries of India are unanimous in their desire to turn to Russia for help, but in accord with national aspirations" and "without any interference in matters of faith and religion".[3]

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[1] CPA IML.
[2] *Kommunist*, Baku, September 2, 1920, p. 2.
[3] *Kommunist*, Baku, September 9, 1920.

While counting on an external force to liberate India, the Association made the adamant and dignified reservation in the Constitution to the effect that it "will not commit itself to conducting in a liberated India the policy of the Powers that will have aided it. No aid can be accepted as a debt. It can be accepted only as a free gift".

The Political Programme of the Indian Revolutionary Association is long-winded about Socialism. It contends that "India can only be freed through pure and real Socialism" and that the "Association shall therefore try to educate the Indian public opinion in all possible ways to accept Socialism as the only salvation of India and of the world".

But the authors of the Programme saw Socialism as nothing but a revival of the "old Socialistic institutions of India", since, they claimed, "India was purely a Socialist Country within comparatively short historical times". She had her own elective bodies, notably, communal "councils of five" (*Panchayats*) and the electorates of Art and Labour Unions. Besides, there were the so-called councils of local self-government. That was supposed to prove the Socialist character of the superstructure in pre-colonial India.

Further on, the Programme argued that the economic basis was just as Socialist. This argument was illustrated by the example of the frontier tribes of India and Baluchistan where "the land is not a personal property, but it is the joint property of the whole tribe, which is distributed every 7 or 10 years, in order to give a share to the younger generation in the tribe land. There are no taxes, no tributes, and no property." In the authors' opinion, "there is only one step between this system and Communism". Since "every man raises and gathers harvest directly himself", all that is required to make this system "Communistic" is for the harvest to "be gathered and taken possession of by the tribal council and redistributed to the tribesmen equally". The Programme proclaimed everybody's duty to be "to try to establish equality and to preach fraternity". In general, Socialist change in India was not supposed to present too much difficulty because "the foundation stone of all Indian institutions is Socialism in the primitive form".

On the very day of his arrival in Tashkent, Abdur Rabb Barq, speaking to the Soviet people who had gathered to welcome him, said that "the ideas of Communism have for long been close to the heart of the Indian who is still living

in his village under a communal system".[1] Nevertheless, the Programme pointed out that the Association "takes upon itself to preach with all its might, the Socialistic ideas as they are understood today, and defend them in a rational and scientific way".

The substance of "Socialist" constructions of the Indian Revolutionary Association was related to primitive Socialism of a revolutionary-communal or patriarchally-tribal type. The early class relations, which were so typical of the inhabitants of Baluchistan and the tribes living along the so-called Durand Line[2] stretching from the foothills of the Pamirs to the Quetta-Pishin upland, were interpreted by revolutionaries hailing from those parts as an indication of authentically Socialist relations. They did not notice how deep in the communal structure of society there had already arisen the forces that were at work to break it up. They believed there was no point in adopting the Socialism of Marx and Lenin since that Socialism dominated the everyday life of their tribes. They boldly opposed imperialist domination as well as local capitalists, finding that local, Indian capitalism also was somewhat foreign to the traditional life-style of the tribes. They called for a return to the communal and clan mode of production and distribution, to ancient Indian times, to "India's Golden Age", which they saw as a haven to save the nation from the destructive consequences of capitalist development.

The problems of the revolution to be made in India, its character, its driving forces and stages of development got very little prominence in the Association's Political Programme. All it said on that score was that the social and political revolutions must take place simultaneously and that the Association "is determined to pave the way and prepare the ground from today in order to achieve the ultimate goal of social and political Revolution". The views of the members of the Association may be presumed to have been as follows: the effect of a simultaneous social and political revolution in India would be to revive and reinstate

[1] *Izvestia*, Tashkent, July 4, 1920, p. 2.

[2] The Durand Line was the border between Afghanistan and British possession in Hindustan, it was established in 1893 upon negotiations between the Afghan Government and the British mission led by G. M. Durand, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the British Colonial Cabinet in India.

old Indian communal institutions; and, thereupon, to establish an independent "federal republic with the rights of the working people defended and the peasantry provided for". It is very important that the Association envisaged the defence of the rights of the working people and the provision for the peasantry and also "the nationalisation of the land belonging to the landlords and princes".

To have enunciated these objectives was a milestone in the evolution of the political understanding of the members of the Association, all the more so since the leader of the national liberation movement in India, Mahatma Gandhi did not go beyond advocating paternalism of landlords and *rajas* over peasants. The latter, extremely important points regarding the defence of working people's rights were not to be found in the Political Programme. They must have been put forward somewhat later. In any case, they were quite definitely formulated as elements of the Programme in August 1920, by Nazir, one of the Association's envoys to the First Congress of the Peoples of the East.[1]

That was to say that, in the opinion of the members of the Association, India was to pass over to Socialism right after liberation. The Political Programme points out: "This Association is firmly convinced that it is not necessary for India to learn the bitter lesson of Democracy which Europe had to learn, and she had better leave this page unread... This Association is resolute to carry on a regular crusade against the so-called Democracy of Europe."

The above-mentioned points of the Programme demonstrate an intention to reflect some of Lenin's ideas regarding the national and colonial questions expressed at the Second Congress of the Communist International. However, these points, divorced from the rest of Lenin's concept of a possible non-capitalist development of economically backward countries, remained unelaborated, and, consequently, the whole system of Socialist propositions of the Political Programme unfounded.

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So you have got an idea of the three politically organised groups of Indian national revolutionaries who emigrated into Soviet Russia soon after the October Revolution. Those

[1] See: *Kommunist*, Baku, August 27, 1920, p. 1.

were, first of all, the group of the so-called Provisional Government of India, then the Indian Section of the Council for International Propaganda and, finally, the Indian Revolutionary Association.

Some believe that the Indian Section, which first existed independently, merged later on with the Indian Revolutionary Association. There is some solid ground for such an assumption, since the Council for International Propaganda claimed as much in a progress report for December 1919 to July 1920. It pointed out that "the Section is hereby renamed as Indian Association".[1] But the report was written right after the arrival of Abdur Rabb Barq with his group in Tashkent, that is, early in July, and, therefore, reflected nothing, as a matter of fact, beyond the intentions of Sovinterprop. In reality, there was no such merger because of the political and personal in-fighting that began between those two groups.

M. Shulman, once back in Tashkent late in August 1920, from a business mission to Osh where he had gone on June 15, that is, before the arrival of the Indian Revolutionary Association in Turkestan, wrote that while in Tashkent, he found Abdur Rabb with his group over there and that "some in-fighting has broken out between the Indian Revolutionary Association, on the one hand, and the Indian Section, on the other", which, in his view, "was on purely personal grounds". He also pointed out that the members of the Indian Section, who supported the Provisional Government, were locked with Abdur Rabb Barq in the struggle they had started in Kabul. In the course of that struggle several members of Abdur Rabb Barq's group defected to the Section.

The squabbling between these two groups had grown so intense, M. Shulman recalled, as to begin to affect the general proceedings of Sovinterprop because the issue of the two Indian organisations was on the agenda of all meetings in the Executive Committee Bureau. In the end, it was decided that the members of the Indian Section, above all, Abdul Majid, the fire-brand, were to be sent away to Baku. Not all of the members of the Indian Section had actually left for Baku, but, as stated in an official document of the Comintern's Turkestan Bureau, the Section, "having held out against the so-called Indian Revolutionary Asso-

[1] CPA IML, s. 122, r. 1, f. 29, p. 266.

ciation, has completely lost all political individuality". (CPA IML.)

That is to say, the two organisations never merged.

The "personal ground" behind that in-fighting was obvious. Abdur Rabb Barq was quite determined to boss the show among the Indian émigrés. At the same time, Barakatullah, relying on his group and the Indian Section associated with it, claimed independence. That was quite manifest in the Provisional Government's ambition to secure its official recognition by Soviet Russia.

There was some political ground, apart from "personal". The Indian Section definitely evolved leftwards. Many of its members, like Mohammad Shafiq, delegated by the Indian Section to the Second Congress of the Comintern, Mohammad Ali, and Abdul Majid, fairly soon began to call themselves Communists.

Moreover, members of the Indian Section were coming round to an understanding of some important problems of the revolution. They began to realise that the independence of India could be won only through the full-scale struggle of the mass of the Indian people, through the struggle of the working people, first and foremost. The leaflet to "Indian Brethren!", issued by the Indian Section and addressed to the Indians in Russia and India, said: "These people [soldiers and peasants] and all kinds of other workers only can destroy the imperialism and capitalism of England." The Section adopted a different approach to the role of Soviet Russia in the liberation of India. The authors of the leaflet looked to Soviet Russia for moral and material support of an embattled people, not for an armed invasion. The leaflet urged: "Rouse these people [soldiers, peasants, and workers] and put the red flag into their hands. Your new ally—Soviet Russia—will fight on to the finish to help you raise the red flag. Any help—moral or material—is your big gain." (CPA IML.)

It is the members of the Indian Section that were the first of the Indian revolutionary émigrés to declare that revolutionary propaganda had to be conducted, above all, among the working people, and it had to be centred on the new, Soviet way of life. "Communicate this life-inspiring news to all workers, peasants and soldiers. Long live freedom of India. Long live the unity of workers of the world!" (CPA IML.)

The Indian Revolutionary Association took a different

view of what must be the major driving force behind the liberation of India, of campaigning for it, and of the role of the working people in the revolution. It is these differences that, along with the elements of personal struggle for commanding positions in the immigrant community, underlay the divergence between the Association and the Indian Section of Sovinterprop.

The views of the politically organised Indian immigrant groups we have considered express the various radical national-democratic revolutionary programmes for the liberation of India. They all bear a distinct impress of the October Revolution and exhibit salient Socialist tendencies.

The aspirations of Indian national revolutionaries were no longer confined to the demand for national independence of India, but went beyond that, in fact, considering an agrarian revolution and some other measures to limit the sway of the exploiter classes in the cities for the benefit of the large masses of the working people. True, this part of their policy guidelines had been elaborated least of all.

To sum up, the greatest gain in the development of the political thinking of Indian revolutionaries was that, under the impact of the October Revolution in Russia, they had begun to link the objective of national liberation with the necessity of serious democratic change. This idea was rather aptly expressed by Abdur Rabb Barq in the speech he made at Tashkent on July 2, 1920. "The tasks before the revolutionaries of India," he said, "are now clear—the emancipation of the labour of the Indian proletarian and peasant, and there is but one way to follow to achieve that—the liberation from the English yoke."[1]

The Socialist idea had now become integral to the outlook of the Indian revolutionaries. However, it still often boiled down to preaching egalitarianism and the revival of the communal institutions of ancient India.

It is not difficult to see that the record of the Indian revolutionary groups so far considered contains many of such elements of radical nationalist programmes as were due to the victory of the Socialist Revolution on Russian soil and the resultant ambition of national revolutionaries from various Eastern countries to demonstrate their ideological community with Bolshevism. Some of them believed that to be helpful in getting material aid from the Comin-

[1] *Izvestia*, Tashkent, July 4, 1920, p. 2.

tern and Soviet Russia to carry on revolutionary work. Another section of the Indian national revolutionaries of Muslim origin expressed their sincere desire to draw closer to the partisans of the Marxist-Leninist teaching, when they referred to the unity of the basic principles of Islam and Communism and to the Socialist character of social-economic institutions of pre-colonial India. And it was not the fault of Indian émigrés that the level of their country's social and economic development and that of their own political understanding, which depended on it in the long run, were not always high enough to let them clearly distinguish the egalitarian and utopian ideas of petty-bourgeois peasant Socialism from scientific Communism. They were making the very opening moves in this direction, while remaining consistent anti-imperialists. And if they had never traversed the whole distance that separated them from scientific Socialism, they still did show themselves to be earnestly striving for it.

Yet at the same time, a considerable section of the Indian revolutionary émigrés continued to believe, and were even more convinced than ever, that India had to be liberated from without. It seemed to them that, with the Soviet state established, there had for the first time emerged the very force that was capable, indeed, of carrying that idea into practice.

Unorganised Indian Émigrés

Scores and even hundreds of individual Indian patriots streamed into Soviet Russia in addition to politically organised groups of Indian national revolutionaries. It was common for many of them to group together, but for no other reason than to make it easier for themselves to overcome the tremendous difficulties of travel across Afghanistan (the Hindu Kush) into Soviet territory, with *basmach* bands prowling around and the Civil War still raging.[1] The largest proportion of the Indians on their way to Soviet Russia

[1] See: Muzaffar Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India and Its Formation Abroad*, p. 27. This book contains a reprint of an article by Rafiq Ahmad "An Unforgettable Journey" about the trek of 80 Indians from Afghanistan into Soviet Turkestan (in September and October 1920). Only in Chardzhou, on their way to Tashkent, did the members of the group come to know each other. "Till then," Rafiq Ahmad wrote, "we could never be sure what was in the mind of the other fellow."

(primarily, into Soviet Turkestan) consisted of representatives of the Muslim wing of the national liberation struggle in India, those involved in the Caliphate movement. Barakatullah, describing later on (in December 1921) the reasons for the pilgrimage of a considerable number of Indians into Soviet Russia, wrote: "Many, although they did not know what Socialism or Communism meant at all, arrived in Russia just because of their enthusiasm and love for Russia, for they had learned that Russia is a friend of Turkey and India." (CPA IML.)

Two Indian Muslim leaders, Jabbar and Sattar Khairy, brothers from a wealthy Delhi family, turned up in Moscow in November 1918. They might have come from Constantinople where they could have worked for the Indian Muslim Committee which had been set up there during the war. The journey to Moscow was hard and long for they had to pass through the countries of Western Europe. From Denmark they were expelled at the British Government's demand for having spoken at a meeting of left Socialists in protest against British tyranny in India. Having arrived in Berlin, the Indians got permission to proceed to the Soviet border thanks to the help they got from the Plenipotentiary of the RSFSR in Germany A. A. Ioffe who had made quite an effort on their behalf. They had to cross the border on foot. Once on Soviet soil, they ran into a Red Army check-point. The only two Russian words they knew, "Comrade" and "Bolshevik" served as a pass for them. The Red Armymen sent the Indians off to a nearby station whose chief, Kosorogin, welcomed them most generously and saw them off on their way to Moscow. His telegram to the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs took too long to reach it and the Khairy brothers found no one to welcome them on their arrival in the Soviet capital. But the cordiality and hospitality that were accorded to them later on rewarded the persistence of those envoys of embattled India.[1] Jabbar and Sattar belonged to the left wing of the Muslim League and expressed the desire, widespread among Indian revolutionaries at the time, to obtain all-round assistance from Soviet Russia to fight British imperialism. The Khairy brothers had brought along a message to the Soviet Re-

[1] See: *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol. I, p. 12; *Petrogradskaya Pravda*, November 28, 1918, p. 3; *Izvestia*, November 17, 1918.

public adopted at a meeting in Delhi back at the end of 1917. That was a remarkable document, one of the earliest comments in India on the Great October Revolution. It was full of exultant amazement at the victorious revolution and concern for its subsequent course. "India keeps her fingers crossed for the duration of your success ... and warns you against friendship with England", which "will not tolerate a democratic Russia, founded on the principles you have proclaimed, side by side with her major colonies". That was followed by a series of advices to the leaders of the Russian Republic which mirrored the philosophy of national egoism that was rather typical of the Indian revolutionaries of the time. "If you want to succeed," the message said, "you must accept no compromise. The independence of India must be part, even the main part of your programme... No democratic rule in the world is possible without the liberation of India, and India's full liberation means the destruction of British imperialism".[1] On November 23, 1918 the Indians were received by V. I. Lenin who had a long conversation with them,[2] and two days later, on November 25, Professor Jabbar made a spirited speech at a Session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee where the visitors were welcomed with a standing ovation. The speaker said he hailed the Russian Revolution "on behalf of the Indian people and seventy million Indian Muslims". His speech offered ample evidence to show that the Bolshevik nationalities policy was close and understandable to Indian patriots and was the easiest one to grasp in India. He also pointed out the most important effect of the October Revolution on India—the awakening of more sections of the population, notably Muslim peasants, who had earlier stayed aloof from political struggles, to political life and to a fight against British oppression.

"The revolution in Russia," Professor Jabbar said, "has produced the strongest ever impression on the Indian people. In spite of all the efforts of England, the slogan of self-determination of nations has reached India... The Muslims of India ... who had given their attention to nothing but the cultural development of their community, have taken

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[1] Quoted in: *Petrogradskaya Pravda*, November 20, 1918, p. 2.
[2] See: A. N. Heifets, *Lenin—a Great Friend of the Peoples of the East*, Moscow, 1960, p. 176 (in Russian).

a new step forward, devoting their powers to politics... We hope that other Indian religious communities will be acting in common with us in driving the foreign authorities out of India." Concluding, Professor Jabbar expressed the hope that the "brothers from great free Russia will stretch out their hand" to the Indians "in the cause of India's liberation".[1] Thereupon, the Indians handed Yakov Sverdlov a document which came to be known as a "Memorandum of the Delegation of Indian Muslims,"[2] which, citing numerous facts, exposed Britain's oppressive, predatory and cruel policies in India and described the Indian people's sorry plight under the rule of British imperialists. It was stated in the document that the large masses of Indians were starving and suffering from the undiminishing burden of taxation, while the fighters for the nation's freedom were subjected to ruthless reprisals and the Indians were deprived of their basic civil rights. The Memorandum indignantly related the destitute and rightless condition of workers, the monstrous exploitation of their labour and the cruel treatment by their masters—British capitalists. It proclaimed the "desire of the Indian population to rebel against the English" and stated that "the people have not submitted to foreign oppression" and that "they are demanding the full independence of India". It closed by expressing the conviction that the entire people of India, with Soviet help, would get the British imperialists expelled. The document was like a proclamation addressed principally to the Indian people themselves and it was, therefore, important for it to become known in India.

Early in December, the Memorandum was radiotelegraphed to the Turkestan Soviet Republic where it was translated into several Oriental languages, printed as leaflets and widely circulated among the local population. Naturally, it found its way into Afghanistan and was brought from there into India by Indian patriots.[3]

The movement of Indian patriots into Soviet Turkestan mounted in 1920. "Groups of Indian revolutionaries continue to arrive in Turkestan," *Izvestia* officially reported

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[1] See: *Sovetskoye Vostokovedenie*, No. 2, 1959, pp. 10, 12; *Izvestia*, November 24, 1918, p. 3.

[2] Central State Archive of the Uzbek SSR, s. 17, r. 1, f. 223, p. 32; *Izvestia*, November 26, 1918, p. 1.

[3] Central State Archive of the Uzbek SSR, s. 17, r. 1, f. 223, pp. 26, 32.

on April 6, 1920. A month later, on May 7, the same newspaper referred to the unending arrival of "representatives of Indian tribes". Those must have been rather small groups of Indians that settled on not only in Tashkent but in other cities of Turkestan, particularly in Andijan and Osh.

The Red Army had scored decisive victories on the Civil War fronts by that time. In particular, by mid-September 1919, it had totally crushed the forces of Kolchak, broken the enemy ring around Turkestan and so linked it up with Central Russia. Although even after that, movement across the territory of Turkestan was still rather risky because of the action of *basmach* bands, it did, nevertheless, become less dangerous. The Caliphate movement, which was widely used by India's national revolutionary elements for crossing into the Soviet Republic, had grown considerably in scope and intensity by that time. By leaving India, young people protested against British tyranny.

The religious motive for that campaign of exodus was protest against the Treaty of Sèvres, that is against the dismemberment of Islamic Turkey by the Entente Powers and against the virtual captivity of her Sultan—the Caliph of all the faithful. The idea of the exodus arose from the Caliphate Conference in Delhi. It was there that a *firman* of Emir Amanullah of Afghanistan was read out on April 18, 1920, inviting the *muhajirins* (Muslim Caliphatist émigrés) to come over to his country. He offered them political asylum and promised support of every kind. For the Kabul Government to do so was an important anti-British act which, besides, could bring with it a further stepping-up of the liberation struggle of the Afghan people themselves.

The exodus involved some 36,000 thousand people, including Hindus as well as Muslims.[1]

Bourgeois historiography (Indian, too) has been seeking to play down the actual substance and significance of the Caliphate campaign of exodus from India, and misinterpreting it. Indian historian J. Bandyopadhyaya, trying to prove that the impact of the October Revolution on India was insignificant, contends that only "fanatically religious Muslims" left India,[2] Muslims of the Hegira com-

[1] See: *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol. I, pp. 36-37.

[2] See: J. Bandyopadhyaya, *Indian Nationalism Versus International Communism*, Calcutta, 1966, p. 130.

mitted to fighting against the dismemberment of Turkey. He writes: "The first group of Indians who had arrived in Russia consisted only of Muslims of the Hijrat who had left India because they did not wish to live any longer under the domination of Britain responsible for the flouting of the legitimate rights of the Turks and other Muslim peoples in the wake of the First World War. Many of them wanted to go to Turkey and join the Turks in fighting Britain to save the Caliph."[1] The Hindus, he claims, showed almost no interest in the ideas of the October Revolution. "Apart from the Hijrati Muslims,"[2] he argues, "the Indians who were most attracted to Communism and the Soviet Union during this period seem to have been some of the Indian revolutionaries and students who had gone abroad." To make the picture still gloomier, Bandyopadhyaya goes on to assert that "the important ones among these people either never came to India, or came only when they were no longer Communists".[3] All that was supposed to bear out the argument that not only did the October Revolution have only a slight effect on India, but also that the ideological seeds of Communism had found no proper ground to grow on in that country.

There have been some other bourgeois writers who attached but limited importance to the exodus movement. American historian John Patrick Haithcox of Carleton College maintained in his book *Communism and Nationalism in India* that the exodus from India had been undertaken "in protest against the dismemberment of Turkey by Great Britain and her allies following World War I... The harsh terms of the treaty imposed on Turkey were interpreted by many Muslims as a threat to Islam itself".[4] An American historian of Indian extraction, Dr. Chattar Singh Samra had this to say about the exodus: "The reaction in India to the Sèvres terms was one of hostility and anger toward the British Government. Extremist Muslims were so inflamed at the treaty that they decided on a Hegira (migration from one country to another for religious

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[1] Ibid., p. 129.
[2] Muslim pilgrims who participated in the 1920 exodus from India.
[3] J. Bandyopadhyaya, op. cit., p. 136.
[4] J. P. Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India. M. N. Roy and Comintern Policy, 1920-1939*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1971, p. 20.

reasons."[1] Another American historian, David Druhe, although he does not expressly consider the exodus movement, still finds it possible to maintain that what inspired even those Indians who attended the First Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku (September 1920) was "only the desire to support the Caliphate".[2] Indian historian Zafar Imam who has given a fairly objective assessment of the great impact of the October Revolution on India, wrote about the Indians who arrived in Tashkent and then in Moscow: "All of them were Muslims and their hostility towards British rule in India was based mainly on religious grounds."[3] There is hardly any point in quoting any more. It is clear that very many bourgeois historians placed emphasis on the religious form of the movement in their evaluations of the Muslim campaign of exodus and see the hurt religious feeling as the main reason behind it. However, it is quite obvious that the exodus movement was essentially a militant political act, principally of petty-bourgeois Muslim masses, against British colonialists to liberate their native land. Besides, those in the movement were determined to start an armed struggle to achieve that end. The Caliphate issue was the occasion rather than the actual reason for the exodus from India. This idea has been expressed clearly enough by Mohammad Ali, a leading ideologist and leader of the Caliphate movement of 1919-1922.

In September 1920, after an inconclusive tour of the Entente countries by a Caliphate delegation to protest against the Treaty of Sèvres, he declared that, to him, "the struggle for the liberation of India mattered far more than the issue of injustices inflicted on the Caliphate. The injured religious feeling of Indian Muslims," Mohammad Ali went on to say, "will be relieved only when India will be in the hands of the Indians."[4] It is the anti-British liberatory character of the exodus movement, although it was, above all, an act by Muslim masses, that attracted a large number of non-Muslim young Indian patriots into it. One man in the movement to say so was Shaukat Usmani, who sub-

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[1] C. S. Samra, *India and Anglo-Soviet Relations (1917-1947)*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1959, p. 52.

[2] D. N. Druhe, *Soviet Russia and Indian Communism. 1917-1947*, Bookman Associates, New York, 1959, p. 28.

[3] Zafar Imam, *Colonialism in East-West Relations*, p. 118.

[4] *Civil and Military Gazette*, October 9, 1920.

sequently became a prominent Communist leader of India. "The mass exodus," he writes in his reminiscences, "that started in the month of May 1920 to Afghanistan was not confined to the Muslims alone. Many Hindu youths also utilised this opportunity and taking Muslim names crossed into Afghanistan and then into the Soviet Union."[1] The exodus movement was part and parcel of the national liberation struggle, designed to step it up and transform it into decisive armed action. "The idea of the Indians leaving for Afghanistan was," Shaukat Usmani goes on to say, "to obtain military aid and arms from Afghanistan and then ... to start a sort of guerilla warfare"[2] against British imperialism.

So *muhajirins* started coming to Kabul. The Soviet Ambassador in the Afghan capital, Ya. Z. Surits reported to the Turkestan Commission in a radiogram of May 29, that the first group of Indian Muslims, 20 in all, had arrived in Kabul and another one numbering 8,000 was due to come over. The number of Indians in Afghanistan was rising rather rapidly. The exodus movement created favourable conditions for all those fighters for the full independence of India, who, under the influence of the October Revolution, had long since wanted to get into Soviet Russia so as to study her experience of a victorious struggle against oppression and take advantage of her help to achieve their own national freedom. Two years later, Shaukat Usmani, writing about himself, said that back in 1919 as soon as he had read about the Bolsheviks supporting revolutionary movements, he began to look for a way to come to Russia and he was not alone to do so. There was a growing number of *muhajirins* in Afghanistan intent on crossing into Soviet Russia. In Afghanistan, Indians could obtain far more information about the October Revolution than at home. There was the Soviet Embassy in Kabul which was ready and willing to provide detailed information on that subject to anyone who might be interested in it. Besides, there were some Indian revolutionaries who had already been to the Soviet Republic and even talked to Lenin and who considered it to be their duty to carry on proper campaigning among their compatriots.

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[1] Shaukat Usmani, "Russian Revolution and India", *Mainstream*, July 1, 1967, p. 14.
[2] Ibid.

These circumstances went far towards expanding the inflow of Indian émigrés into the Soviet Republic. Rafiq Ahmad, for example, who had, just as Shaukat Usmani, walked all the way to Tashkent with the first group of émigrés, said later on that Prativadi Acharya and Abdur Rabb Barq, back from Moscow in December 1919, spent much time talking to young Indian freedom fighters in Kabul. Abdur Rabb Barq was particularly active. "He told us," Rafiq Ahmad communicated, "that in Russia revolution had taken place and if we went there we could see and learn many things. We agreed at once that we should do so. From that time onwards our constant thought was about ways and means of reaching that land of revolution."[1]

That is to say that the Caliphate campaign brought forth a basically new element—a consistent emigrant movement of hundreds of Indian national revolutionaries into the land of the October Revolution, now linking up the struggle for their country's liberation with the idea of an alliance with Soviet Russia. It is the working people of Soviet Russia that they looked to in the hope of getting practical aid and support in the struggle against colonialists and borrow some of the revolutionary experience of resolving social problems. Shaukat Usmani writes: "We are not exaggerating if we state here that almost a great majority of the people who had come over to Afghanistan had focussed their hopes on the Soviet Union much before leaving their homes."[2]

Nevertheless, a substantial number of most dedicated Muslims in the Caliphate movement were preparing for a march into Anatolia so as to join the Kemalists in an armed struggle against Britain and against the Entente. It is noteworthy that precisely at that time the leaders of the Caliphate movement were gravitating towards the Gandhist principles of nonviolent resistance to Britain. The mass of those involved in it, contrary to what their leaders wanted them to do, were anxious to start a full-scale battle against British imperialism and were certainly dissatisfied with the passive methods of protest and expressed that dissatisfaction by their declared intention to march

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[1] See: Muzaffar Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India and Its Formation Abroad*, p. 16.

[2] Shaukat Usmani, "Russian Revolution and India", *Mainstream*, July 1, 1967, p. 14.

into Soviet Russia and into Anatolia. In his book of memoirs *From Peshawar to Moscow*, which appeared in 1927, Shaukat Usmani wrote: "The wave of Hijrat which surged over the political ocean of India in 1920 swept away with it to lands far off not only the dissatisfied landless peasantry and shopkeepers of the Punjab but also some of the intelligentsia of the country with clear notions of freedom. This intelligentsia was a part and parcel of the advanced left wing of the Indian nationalist movement who could not conscientiously acquiesce in the programme of nonviolent noncooperation.[1]

But both the first and the second groups of *muhajirins* intended to march into Soviet Turkestan, first and foremost. While the former wanted to stay on there, the latter believed that it was through Soviet lands that lay the surest ways to the borders of embattled Turkey. In other words, they counted on support from the Soviet authorities and on their assistance in traversing the rest of the way to Turkey. And the Soviet authorities did do everything possible to ease the lot of the fighters for the freedom of India by granting them the right of free travel by rail and providing them with food, clothes, etc.

Indians had twice officially applied to the Afghan authorities for permission to cross the northern border. Yet, the Afghan Government dragged its feet, apparently in fear of a strained relationship with England. Rafiq Ahmad said that some Indians "became anxious for the journey to the Soviet country."[2] Under the circumstances, the Indians, in a rather determined frame of mind, sent in their third petition which was in the form of an ultimatum stating that if they did not get permission, they would set out without it.[3]

In the end, the travellers did get permission to leave and the second group of 89 young Indians, following that of the Indian Revolutionary Association, set off for Termez. It was led by Muhammad Akbar Khan. The Soviet Consular office in the Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif issued him with an identity card, dated August 28, 1920, as a representative of a group of Indians "numbering 89 persons

[1] Quoted from: *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol. I, p. 36.

[2] See: Muzaffar Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India and Its Formation Abroad*, p. 17.

[3] Ibid.

emigrating into the RSFSR for unobstructed passage to the city of Tashkent". The Consular Office asked all Soviet "military and civilian bodies and organisations to lend them all possible assistance by providing them with means of conveyance and food supplies..." Yet another group of Indians, about as large, left for Soviet Turkestan a little later.[1]

An official communication reached Moscow from the Council for International Propaganda on November 10: "We have around 100 Indian revolutionaries over here [in Tashkent], and a further 600 are waiting in Termez." (CPA IML.) A little over a month later, around December 15, 1920, the Turkestan Bureau of the Comintern reported to the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI), in particular, that "some 200 people have arrived from Afghanistan in the last six weeks. They left India in the wake of the Caliphate movement". It was not specified, however, in what cities those immigrants had settled.

A large number of Indians flocked to Bukhara after it had been freed from the rule of the Emir. In March 1921, the information chief of the Soviet Mission in Bukhara, Fradkin, communicated to the Council for International Propaganda that "there are up to 150 Indian Muslims and some 20 Bengalis in Old Bukhara".[2] That means that there were between 100 and 110 Indian revolutionary émigrés in Tashkent towards the end of 1920. Many Indians settled in Andijan.[3]

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[1] See: Muzaffar Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India...*, pp. 17, 19.

[2] M. Shulman maintained that there were a total of between 150 and 200 Indians in Tashkent and Bukhara by December 1920. An official of the Comintern's Turkestan Bureau, I. Kutuzov wrote on December 30, 1920 that "there are 70 Indians in Old Bukhara with whom political work has to be done" as distinct from those old immigrant tradesmen with whom, in his opinion, there was no point in doing such work. According to an account by the Indian Revolutionary Committee, there were 104 Indians in Tashkent at the very end of 1920 (See: ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 488, p. 3). A progress report of the Comintern's Turkestan Bureau covering the period from late May till June 15, 1921, suggested that there still remained no fewer than 80-90 Indians even by mid-1921.

[3] A report by the Provisional All-India Revolutionary Committee stated, for instance, that "a small colony of Indians who migrated some ten to fifteen years ago to Russia, had lived there (in Andijan) as petty merchants and traders... Propaganda was made among them". As a result, some 25 young men agreed to work together with Indian revolutionaries (ORCSA, s. 495, r. 68, f. 413, p. 118).

A large group of Indians also assembled in Baku after it had been liberated by the Red Army. It comprised mostly the deserters from the British occupation forces in Turkey, Iran and Iraq. Besides, there were the Indians that strove to reach the Kemalists in Anatolia at any cost, coming over from Soviet Central Asia as well as from Iran. An Indian section was set up under the auspices of the Azercentropechat (Azerbaijan Central Press Agency) in that city on June I, 1920. It was, however, rather an editorial group engaged in the translation and publication of Soviet propaganda material in Urdu, Hindi, Pushtu and Arabic.[1] Besides, it published a fortnightly newspaper, *Azad Hindustan* (Free India) in Urdu, which, guided by the principles of Islam, conducted anti-English and anti-imperialist progapanda and campaigned for alliance and friendship with Soviet Russia. One of the *Azad Hindustan* issues, which appeared in October 1920, was entirely devoted to the First Congress of the Peoples of the East.[2]

Disproving, in fact, his own contention that it was only the Muslims that had been open to the influence of the October Revolution and that they alone had set out for the Soviet Republic, Bandyopadhyaya related an instructive story of a Hindu, Sibnath Banerjee. He had gone to Kabul in order to proceed to Germany for engineering training. But after reading Communist literature in Kabul, Banerjee, with a new group of Indians, left for Soviet Russia in 1922. Over there, he graduated from the Communist University for the Working People of the East and became a Marxist, although he never joined the Communist Party.[3] Bandyopadhyaya claims that the new group of Indian Muslims left for Russia because the Afghan Government had denied them asylum.[4] But apparently the true reason was different. The whole group, and, consequently Banerjee, too, had an opportunity to return to India, and in that case the Indians would hardly have had any danger to face. Yet, they left for Soviet Russia which made them outlaws straight away, from the standpoint of the British authorities. Besides, Banerjee stayed on in Russia for almost two

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[1] "Progress Report of the Indian Section of Azercentropechat in Baku for Three Months", September 27, 1920. (CPA IML.)
[2] ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 44, p. 6.
[3] See: J. Bandyopadhyaya, *Indian Nationalism...*, p. 131.
[4] Ibid., p. 132.

years, giving up his long-cherished dream of getting engineering training in Germany. He returned to India in 1925 to become one of the prominent leaders of his country's trade-union movement. Banerjee's story makes it quite clear that the October Revolution had a powerful impact on the thinking of ordinary Indians and on their choice of a calling in life.

There would have been a far greater number of Indians in Soviet Russia if the Aghfan Government, under pressure from Britain, had not hindered the emigrant flow. An official dispatch of August 13, 1920 sent by the Foreign Relations Department of the Turkestan Central Executive Committee to the Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, L. M. Karakhan in Moscow, concerning the expected arrival of the first group of Indian *muhajirins*, stated: "The first batch of refugees from Punjab and Peshawar, 85 people out of six hundred, is due to arrive in Tashkent".[1] This dispatch could be interpreted to mean only one thing, and that is that there had been 600 people who were prepared to leave, but only 85 or 89 of them were allowed to do so, as one could gather from other reports. An Indian revolutionary, Mohammad Sadiq, reported from Chardzhou on April 27, 1921 that "the Afghan authorities have arrested at Mazar-i-Sharif 500 Indian emigrants who were on their way to Russia". A representative of the Comintern's Turkestan Bureau in Andijan, Shkolnik, wrote to Tashkent on May 18, 1921, that "36 Indians were detained late in April 1921, as they travelled from India to Russia via Jarkend and Kashgaria, and were escorted back to India on orders from the British Consul. We presume them to have been a delegation to this country." (CPA IML.)

The Afghan authorities may well be presumed to have interfered even with the very process of making up the groups that wished to leave Afghanistan and did whatever they could to have them comprise mostly the people who wanted to go to Turkey rather than to Soviet Russia. Moreover, the Afghan mission in Tashkent made every effort to persuade Indians who had already settled in Turkestan to go back as soon as possible. For example, a report of the Indian Revolutionary Committee, signed by M. N. Roy, stated as a fact, rather than an assumption, that "the Afghan

[1] Soviet Army Central State Archives (SACSA), s. 110, r. 1, f. 96, p. 50.

authorities induced the Tashkent Indians in every way to come back to Afghanistan, wishing to counter work on Russian territory and trying to repair damaged reputation because of the maltreatment of Indians in Afghanistan. They provided Indians with money and horses, and also with passports, and even sought to persuade the military school cadets to leave Tashkent."[1] The facts just mentioned, although incomplete, still provide an idea of the great determination of very many Indians to get into Soviet Russia and also of just about how many of them succeeded in doing so and stayed on in the Soviet Republic for some time.

Since about half the emigrants strove to go to Turkey and to do so as soon as possible, there was a continuous movement of Indians not only from Soviet Central Asia to the Caucasus, to Baku, but also in the opposite direction—to Afghanistan via Tashkent. The point is that Indians, as a rule, came back to Baku without ever reaching Turkey because the Turkish authorities refused to admit them point-blank.[2]

To the Soviet Republic the Indians were admitted in an entirely different way. The military and civil authorities in Turkestan, Baku, and elsewhere accorded them a resounding, open-hearted welcome which was only too natural for the people who were enthusiastically making a revolution at home and wished to see the Indians as their comrades-in-arms and were willing to come to their aid without delay. Rafiq Ahmad recalled that when the garrison of the Termez Fort learned about the approach of a group of Indians, Red Army soldiers and officers came, with a band playing

[1] See: "Report of Work Done in the Three Months of October [1920]-January [1921] by the Provisional All-Indian Central Revolutionary Committee" (ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 488, p. 4).

[2] For instance, the Baku Council for Propaganda and Action in the East informed Tashkent on February 9, 1921 that the Turkish mission in Azerbaijan "has not found it possible to send to Anatolia" 33 emigrant Indians and asked the Baku Council for Propaganda to "dispatch them to Afghanistan". There is plenty of evidence to this effect. The behaviour of the Anatolian authorities in this respect was due to a variety of reasons.

The Kemalists hardly had much of a shortage of manpower resources and, perhaps, were not sure of the political stability of Caliphatists because the Kemalist revolution was directed not only against the Entente, but, essentially, against the Sultan himself while he was nominally the banner of the Caliphate movement. Besides, the Kemalists feared that the Indians who had passed through Soviet Russia would become an additional source of Bolshevik influence on the Turkish people.

music, to offer welcome and escorted them to the fort as distinguished visitors.[1]

Now, if, for all the vicissitudes that had to be faced by those who wished to come to Soviet Russia, the Indians did come, that means the power of attraction that the Soviets had was very great, indeed. The story of the movement of the group led by Muhammad Akbar Khan is quite indicative in this respect.

When Indians set out in boats downstream along the Amu-Darya from Termez they were taken prisoner and robbed by a *basmach* band in the area of the Kerki Fort. The travellers were in captivity for twenty-five days, being beated up, insulted and tortured. Eleven of them were savagely killed. Several *muhajirines* escaped back to Afghanistan. *Basmach* bandits were just about to shoot the whole group but the approach of a Red Army detachment forced them to retreat, and then the Indians were cordially welcomed and accommodated by the Kerki Red Army garrison.[2] The travellers' ordeal was not over, however. The fort was soon attacked by numerous *basmach* bands. And then some of the Indians joined the Red Armymen to beat off the attacks of counter-revolutionaries in trenches for seven days, defending the sector overlooking the Amu-Darya.[3] "We fought on until we saved the garrison," Shaukat Usmani wrote in a letter to M. N. Roy in 1922. (CPA IML.) When the enemy attack was repulsed and the immediate danger for the fort inmates removed, its small garrison launched a counter-offensive. Three Indians took part in chasing the retreating enemy: Rafiq Ahmad,[4] Shaukat Usmani and Masood Ali Shah.[5] The former two subsequently became Communists.

The group of Muhammad Akbar Khan, rather decimated though it was, arrived at Chardzhou on October 22. The RSFSR Consul in the Chardzhou and Kerki fiefdoms, Sko-

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[1] See: Muzaffar Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India and Its Formation Abroad*, p. 19.

[2] Ibid., pp. 21-25.

[3] Ibid., p. 26.

[4] Ibid. In 1967, Rafiq Ahmad, an aged man, was invited to Moscow on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of Soviet government and was awarded a medal of honour for his part in the Red Army battles against armed counter-revolution (See: *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol. I, p. 229).

[5] Muzaffar Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India and Its Formation Abroad*, pp. 26, 27.

rikov, reported in a telegram of October 22, 1920 that "73 Indian revolutionaries have arrived in this city whom I propose to dispatch to Tashkent later today". (CPA IML.) However, 36 of them refused to go to Tashkent and declared that they would go to nobody but Kemal "even at their peril."[1] The episodes just described are remarkable in many ways. To appreciate them, just as other relevant material, one should first identify the social and political image of those scores and hundreds of people that made up the Indian immigrant community in the Soviet Republic.

Social and Political Profile of Indian Revolutionary Émigrés

Some idea of the social complexion of the immigrant community is provided by the questionnaires which Indians filled in on their arrival in Soviet Russia. Fortunately, a pack of eighty-four forms filled in by the Indians who settled in Tashkent late in 1920 and early in 1921 has been discovered. (CPA IML.) Each form contained 20 questions.

The social origin of revolutionaries was disclosed by their answers to the questions: "What is the social status of your parents?" The forms provided a rather motley classification of the origin of the immigrants:

crop-farmers	17
landowners	14
peasants	2
zamindars	11
jaghirdars	4
nambardars	1
sardars	2
landlords	3
office employees	9
tradesmen	14
workers	2
contractors	2
intellectuals	3

[1] The second part of Muhammad Akbar Khan's group, comprising Rafiq Ahmad, Shaukat Usmani and others, arrived in Tashkent late in October or early in November. In a letter of November 10, 1920 to L. M. Karakhan, M. N. Roy wrote from Tashkent: "...A detachment of 36 men which had arrived here about ten days ago, was taken prisoner by Turkmens at Kerki..." To judge by a report of the Indian Revolutionary Committee, that group consisted of 37 men and arrived in Tashkent on October 21 or 22, 1920 (ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 488, p. 2).

The meaning of the categories just mentioned needs to be clarified because, considering the specific Indian conditions, it is not always clear what, for instance, is the difference between crop-farmer and landowner or between both of them and the peasant. Nor is it clear what the *zamindars* are, for in various parts of India this term denoted different social strata. In Punjab and the North-West border province, the *zamindar* meant "peasant" while in the rest of India it meant "landlord". Since the representatives of these provinces predominated among the immigrants, this term in this particular case meant landowning peasants, not landlords at all. Direct information on the subject of interest to us can be derived from answers to the question: "Do you have any property?", while indirect information can be obtained under the heading "Education". A reference to this heading will hardly be objectionable because the social complexion of any particular person reveals, as a rule, the extent of this official education. There is a quite natural feedback which we shall use.

A perusal of the entries under the said headings makes it clear that the property status of landowners, crop-farmers, peasants and *zamindars* was almost identical and that all these names stood for landowning peasants. Of the seventeen immigrants hailing from crop-farmers' families, only one said he had no property, while among fourteen men coming from landowners' families, there were three have-nots, and among the *zamindars*—six. Of the two peasants, one owned "land and houses", while the other had no property at all. Perhaps, all of the have-nots just mentioned were peasants who had been ruined. The rest of the people of the three categories mentioned had some property in their possession which was described in a perfectly similar way in their forms, for instance, "I have some land and a house", or only "land", or only "house", and sometimes "houses". Only in two cases did the crop-farmers specify that they had "land—120 *jaribs*" or "land —25 *jaribs*" (1 *jarib*—4043,336 sq m). The heading "Education" also confirmed our conclusion: among the 17 immigrants coming from crop-farmers' families, one had incomplete higher education, two had secondary education, and a further two, primary schooling as their training. The remaining twelve, that is the overwhelming majority of that category, were illiterate.

The groups of landowners and *zamindars* presented a some-

what different picture. Their educational standards were clearly higher. Among the landowners, one had higher education, three, incomplete higher education, one, secondary education, three, primary schooling, two, military training, and three were illiterate; among the *zamindars*, three had incomplete higher education, four, secondary, two, primary, and two more were illiterate. That group must have comprised somewhat better-off peasants.

One should not take these facts as something absolute. For even of the two men who called themselves peasants, one had higher education and the other one was illiterate. Now, considering that it was the best educated Caliphatists that were to travel abroad, one may take this to mean that the relatively high educational standard of the "landowners'" group will not, it seems to us, call in question the idea that it also consisted primarily of landowning peasants.

The second largest group—fourteen men—consisted of tradesmen by origin. Six of them were sons of shopkeepers who had inherited nothing at all from their parents. Only one—the son of a big tradesman, and tradesman himself—owned three houses, six shops and one warehouse. The others' property was described as "house and land" or "shop and house". That group's educational standards also confirmed that it had petty shopkeepers predominating. Four in the group were illiterate, three had nothing beyond primary schooling, two, secondary education, three, incomplete higher education, and two, full higher education.

The landlord class was represented by children of *jaghirdars* and *sardars*.

Jaghirdars rather indefinitely evaluated their property, usually confining themselves to the short "yes," althouh one of them who chose to be more precise put down: "Yes, big property." But the group of *jaghirdars* was quite small —only four men, and that of *sardars* was even smaller—two men. As to the landlords, those must have hailed from families of feudal princes, like *raja* Mahendra Pratap. Indian historian Devendra Kaushik, who studied the question of Indian immigrant community in Soviet Asia, maintains that "there were feudal chiefs"[1] among the emigrants. There were few of them, it is true. Only 3.5 per cent in this particular case. What claims attention is a considerable proportion of emigrants coming from clerical families,

[1] D. Kaushik, Op. cit., p. 76.

who, as a rule, worked for the colonial administration. The same category must, apparently, include intellectuals by origin. In that case, the clerical contingent will add up to 12.

So, the social origin of Indian revolutionaries in exile, to judge by the membership of this group, can be described as follows:

peasants (owners and tenants)	44
workers	2
landlords	6
feudal chiefs	3
tradesmen	14
clerks	12
others	2

People of peasant stock were predominant in this group—nearly 53 per cent. Petty-bourgeois elements in cities—sons of tradesmen, clerical staff and the like came second, about 36 per cent. Those hailing from landlord families made up about six per cent and those coming from feudal princes, under four per cent. The proportion of workers was quite insignificant—nearly 2.5 per cent. This composition of immigrants may be said to have been rather like the social structure of Indian society of the time.

It is indicative that the social status of all of them, by the time they embarked on their revolutionary activity (the forms contained this question: "What was your occupation before you started your revolutionary activity?") was drastically different from their origin. Nearly all the revolutionaries hailing from the families of landowning peasants had already lost their direct connection with crop-farming. The group we have taken as a case in point had as few as five crop-farmers left in it. The terms "landowner" and "peasant" were absent altogether, as were the *zamindars*. Many of those categories had become "soldiers" or "servicemen", there were twelve of them. The number of clerical staff had gone up to 18, and there emerged a new category—students—twenty-seven (including twenty university students). The latter category had absorbed, above all, those who hailed from privileged landowners and, of course, representatives of well-to-do social groups (tradesmen, clerical staff, etc.).

The number of workers had more than doubled to add up to five, evidently, because of the inclusion of peasants

who had come to town to earn a living after having been ruined in the country.

The most salient feature of the social make-up of the Indian immigrant community was that, by their origin, most of its members were landowning peasants or tenants, while, by their status, almost all of them were petty-bourgeois urban elements—clerical staff, tradesmen, students or servicemen.

Accounts by their contemporaries, who worked together with them, or by the Indians themselves provide additional information by which to judge the social image of the revolutionaries in exile. An official of the Comintern's Turkestan Bureau, Berkuth, said in a written report about the Indians who had come to Tashkent in March 1921, after abortive attempts to get into Anatolia to join the Kemalists: "Among the 34 men, there were ten intellectuals who could speak English and participated in the revolutionary movement in India. The social status of most of them [out of those ten] was either that of petty landowners [*zamindars*] or students [*zamindars'* children], pupils of English schools, two doctors, and the remaining [24 men] were downtrodden people, totally illiterate and unable to do anything on their own except praying five times a day. All immigrants were Muslims coming from Delhi, Lahore, Peshawar, and Amritsar." (CPA IML). The last phrase is noteworthy as underlining that most of the immigrants were urban dwellers.

Shaukat Usmani pointed out in a letter to Roy that a group of 36 men, he had arrived in Tashkent with, had just "a few lettered comrades" in it, and, speaking of the rank-and-file members of the Indian Revolutionary Association, he remarked that "they were all illiterate, having no standpoint of their own, and obsessed with fanaticism". (CPA IML.)

Both observers point up the preponderance of illiterate people among the immigrants. There were quite a few of them in the case we had referred to—23, while people with primary schooling or, in other words, undereducated, numbered 15, and both of these categories made up almost 45 per cent of the group members. It is quite possible that the proportion of unlettered people was appreciably higher in other groups, especially in those that went to Turkey.

There is, however, another thing that is bound to strike the eye—a large proportion of near-intellectuals with in-

complete higher education (18) and higher education (12) who made up together over 30 per cent of the immigrants of this group and, with Indians having secondary education (16) added to them, the total proportion will exceed 50 per cent. True, the standard of reference by which to judge their intellectuality was rather relative. The point is that the overwhelming majority of the revolutionaries in exile consisted of young people between 20 and 27,[1] and, therefore, those of them who were educated were no more than prospective intellectuals. But anyway, it is clear that it was the culturally and educationally advanced section of the Indian population that took part in full-scale revolutionary activity and within this category we must certainly range the immigration movement into Soviet Russia.

The Indian immigrants' religious affiliation is yet another point of interest. Both Shaukat Usmani and Berkuth noted the preponderance of Muslims among the immigrants. Devendra Kaushik holds, however, that "it will be wrong to believe that the "'Muhajirins' (Muslim Chalifatist émigrés) predominated among the Indian revolutionaries active in Soviet Asia".[2] That is correct, if we mean the top leaders who represented in Soviet Russia various Indian revolutionary organisations outside India (in Europe, America and in Soviet Turkestan itself). But the rank-and-file membership, that is the majority of revolutionaries in exile, who stayed in Tashkent, Bukhara, Baku, Chardzhou, Andijan and some other cities, and especially Indians on the move to Turkey, those were predominantly representatives of the Muslim wing of the Indian national liberation movement. It may be presumed, as stated earlier on, that about half the Indians present in the Soviet Republic were anxious to go to Turkey and were just waiting for the Soviets to help them forward on their way to Anatolia.

The other half of the Indian immigrants consisted of people who saw the Soviet Republic, rather than any other place, as their final destination. For them to participate in the Hegira was but a means to ease their crossing from Afghanistan into Soviet Turkestan. Yet, even that section

[1] The list of the 89-man group of immigrants, which originally comprised Shaukat Usmani and Rafiq Ahmad, had none over thirty. For the most part, they were young people under twenty-seven, and some even under twenty.

[2] D. Kaushik, "Indian Revolutionaries in Soviet Asia", p. 76.

was, to all appearances, dominated by Muslims. Members of other religious communities were in the minority. And there is nothing surprising about it and, of course, nothing at all that would have confirmed the far-fetched argument about the Muslim's predisposition to Socialism. The whole point is that it is the Muslim areas of Hindustan that lay closest to the Soviet border. Therefore, their population experienced the influence of the revolutionary events in Russia before and more than anybody else, and it was also for that reason that it was relatively easier for the people of those areas to make their way into the Soviet Republic than it was for residents of the rest of India.

There is enough evidence to bear out the judgement just given about the religious complexion of the rank-and-file Indian émigrés in Soviet Central Asia. It is this fact of most of the émigrés professing Islam that the first Indian Communists and some Soviet officials who worked with the Indians noted with bitterness. We say "with bitterness" because the early Indian Communists did not regard as revolutionaries those who fought for nothing beyond national liberation. From their point of view, it was only the fighters for Socialist ideals that were true revolutionaries.

Describing the Indians who had converged on Tashkent and Bukhara late in 1920, M. Shulman wrote: "All these immigrants are Muslims who emigrated from India because of the Caliphate movement." He pointed out that these people were a "raw, politically uneducated element. It will take a lot of time, skill and patience to make them fit for revolutionary and political work..." They, Shulman continued, "are religious revolutionaries," and "they are all Muslims ready to sacrifice their lives for their religion at any moment". (CPA IML). The same idea was expressed, even more definitely, in a letter sent by the so-called All-India Revolutionary Committee (created by M. N. Roy) to Skorikov in Chardzhou in November 1920. Representatives of "nineteen Indian emigrants in Chardzhou" arrived in Tashkent, the letter said, "who have to proceed to Turkey... These are just emigrants (not revolutionaries) ... The same applies to a considerable majority of the emigrants arriving from Afghanistan". (CPA IML). The Baku Council for Propaganda and Action wrote as much to the Tashkent Sovinterprop in a letter of November 13, 1920. The letter said that 35 Indian refugees from Afghanistan ar-

rived in Baku, that all of them wanted to go only to Turkey and were an "entirely raw public", in the political sense. (CPA IML.)

The evidence just cited goes far towards objectively characterising the Indian emigrants. But not in every respect, however. The conclusion, based on the religious sentiment and commitment of the emigrants, about their political immaturity, about their being inert and a "raw public" cannot be taken for granted. For even the Caliphatists, though some of them were unlettered, had enough national political awareness to set out on the hardest-ever march, which by itself was a feat, so as to join afterwards in an armed struggle together with Kemalists, against those who subjugated their native land. And in that case, their religious commitment and their adherence to Islam had given them idea of Muslim unity they could well understand, which perfectly reflected their major concern and ardent desire to crush British imperialism in India while defending Turkey.

Another section of the Indian revolutionary émigrés consisted of people who had nothing like Turkey on their minds as they set off on a long journey across Turkestan. Their only ambition was to get into the Soviet Republic. But why? Here is their own answer. One of the questions in the aforementioned forms was: "Why have you come to Russia?"

The largest proportion of those asked—forty-five people—answered: "To work for the benefit of the Indian Revolution", or "To serve the Indian Revolution", or "For the liberation of India", or "To fight England", or "To serve India", or "To serve my native land". The answers of another group—of seventeen—were: "To get help from Russia", "To ask for aid", "In search of aid from the Soviet authorities". Seven persons declared that they had come "To join the Revolution", or "To conduct revolutionary work", or as the 20-year-old Shaukat Usmani replied: "To join the revolutionary movement". Eight people gave answers like this: "In order to get military training and learn propaganda work". Five declared that they wanted "To study the Bolsheviks" or "To learn to make a revolution", or as the 50-year-old Abdas Subhan said, Indian revolutionaries wanted to learn a lesson from the Russian Revolution, or, as the 42-year-old Sabdar Khan declared, to study the Russian Revolution and find the ways for the Indian Revolution to follow. Abdur Rabb Barq, the leader

of the Indian Revolutionary Association, writing to Georgy Chicherin on July 29, 1921, said that it was not because of good living conditions in the Soviet Republic at all that his organisation had arrived here. The Indians could "live far better outside Russia than inside. The only thing that attracted Indian revolutionaries about Russia was her revolutionary spirit, her proximity to India and her revolutionary schools to train young revolutionaries". One of them said that he had come to Russia on having deserted the English Army, while another announced that he was just on his way back home from Turkey.

So all of the Indian immigrants in the Soviet Republic—and there was enough evidence in the questionnaires to bear that out—were people having a high standard of national awareness, inspired by the idea of national liberation and convinced that it was in the Soviet Republic and with her help that they would be best able to serve the cause of the revolutionary struggle for the idependence of India.

At the same time, over 80 per cent of them, to judge by the forms which had been studied, still had little knowledge of what the help of the Soviet authorities should consist of and how they had to go about liberating their own native land. Speaking to a general meeting of Indians in Tashkent late in December 1920, M. N. Roy said: "You want one thing—to fight the English, although many of you have no idea of how this is to be done. So you are uncertain as to your own future movement."[1] That was a right remark.

However, some of the revolutionary émigrés had come to see better the course of events on Soviet soil and to detect their important details and particulars. We had about ten per cent of such in this group. They realised how important the work of the organisation, explanation and propaganda among the masses was for the revolution, and they saw from their own experience that revolutions had to be defended, arms in hand. Hence the answer in the questionnaire: "We want to get military training and learn propaganda work".

Finally, a very small, yet best prepared section of the émigrés found that the whole point of their stay in the Soviet Republic was to learn to make a revolution, to study

[1] "Indian Émigrés in Turkestan". Communication made by Comrade Roy at a general meeting of Indian revolutionaries and immigrants called at the request of the Comintern's Turkestan Bureau. (See: ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 488, p. 6.)

the experience of the Russian Bolsheviks and to draw the lessons for their own revolutionary work. There were no more than six per cent of such immigrants in the case I have just given. Those were, as a rule, either long-time participants in the revolutionary movement, disillusioned with the conspiratorial tactics of struggle, or young revolutionaries looking for an answer to the question of how to fight.

Perhaps, their attitude to the Soviet system of State power was the most striking feature of the political image of ordinary, unorganised Indian immigrants. Of course, this was not, nor could it be, the identical attitude of representatives of various social groups which differed among themselves by their educational standards and by the degree of their political and revolutionary training. In fact, even the evidence we have already derived from the forms we have examined give a certain idea of that problem. But this is not enough, if only because of the unavoidable brevity of questionnaires. Therefore it should be corroborated by a different kind of arguments, more dynamic and detailed.

The most general reason to explain why representatives of large sections of the Indian people went to Soviet Russia or to Turkey, through Soviet Russia, was, above all, because they saw the Soviet Republic as the defender of the oppressed, as their haven and refuge, and because they considered it to be a free country able and willing to aid the fighters for the national liberation of other peoples.

Here is a very typical story by a 25-year-old Indian peasant, Abdul Karim Muhammajan. Both his father and himself had been grain-growers all through their life. "About eight months ago [the story was recorded on June 3, 1921. —*M. P.*]," Abdul Karim said, "I left India to travel through Afghanistan, because the English are oppressing the Indians, and I just wanted to avoid being called up for service with the forces of England... In Afghanistan, I heard that Soviet Russia was aiding all the poor and revolutionaries, even if they were foreign nationals, and offered refuge to all revolutionaries in general and, because people in India are oppressed by the English, I made up my mind to leave my country along with others, and move to Russia." (CPA IML).

That was a widespread perception of the Soviet Republic. M. Shulman pointed out that ordinary Indians who were crossing into Soviet Russia, were a "rather raw element,

rather different from the European popular mass ... but they realise, if in their own way, the advantage of a free nation ... I often heard them say: 'Yes, we are in a free country, where nobody can enslave us; we have had enough of English harassment.'" (CPA IML).

A representative of ROSTA, the Russian news agency, managed to talk with two Indians in the summer of 1920 who had deserted the British Army and come over into Soviet Turkestan. "Why have you fled?" the correspondent asked. One of them answered: "My brother was killed by the English during the Lahore uprising."[1] The other explained his flight by saying that he did not wish "to fight against his Hindu and Muslim brothers" which the English Command wanted him to do.[2]

It is noteworthy that even those Indian emigrants who had come to Baku or Tashkent so as to get into Turkey from there regarded Soviet Russia as their great friend that wanted to help the entire oppressed East.

There is a report by Mikhail Pavlovich to an ECCI meeting late in 1920 about the activities of the Baku Council for Propaganda and Action which reported circumstantially, in particular, on how "the Presidium of the Council has been visited by a group of Indian soldiers who defected from the British Army and asked to be sent forthwith to the Turkish front to be able to fight British forces in Mesopotamia". Pavlovich said further on: "The soldiers ... were very keen on our educational initiatives. They asked me very circumstantially about what exactly was being taught at our short-term courses [organised for revolutionary workers from the East] and expressed their great joy on learning that lectures delivered at the courses dealt with the origin of the Earth and Man, the essence of the class struggle, and provided brief geographical and other information." Now, one of the soldiers remarked with bitterness: "We have lived so many years fighting for Britain in Persia, Turkey, and France without ever being taught as much as to write and read. Soviet Russia is our friend and she wants all Indians, Persians and Turks to be enlightened and to under-

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[1] This must be a reference to the armed suppression of the massive anti-imperialist movement in Punjab and other provinces of India by British forces in March and April, 1919.

[2] See: *Izvestia*, Tashkent, July 15, 1920, p. 1.

stand their own status. The whole of the East will defend Russia."[1]

So it was not by chance that the Caliphatists should have moved through the territory of Russia and, rarely, through that of Persia, on their way to Turkey. That was because Russia had become the Land of the October Revolution, a Soviet Republic.

There are two rather noteworthy questionnaires among the 84 forms the Indian immigrants had filled. These are by two sons of landowning peasants—Mohammad Ismail and Mohammad Khan. Both had served with the Biritsh Army and escaped from India, evidently, into Iran when World War I broke out. In 1919, they succeeded in crossing into Soviet territory where they joined the Red Army and fought with it against Denikin for several months. Significantly enough, it is not the date of their departure from India, but that of their enlistment in the Red Army that they regarded as the starting point of their revolutionary activities.

The story of the Indian revolutionary émigrés, who had settled in Bukhara, is of interest in the same sense. Fradkin, chief of the information service of the Soviet mission in Bukhara, said about them: "These are political émigrés who left India during the war and afterwards, some of them intellectuals and some workers and peasants." They showed themselves to be very active in working to strengthen and defend the recently established and still fragile people's democratic system which had the sympathy and support of Soviet Russia. "A large section of that group" was "in the service of the Bukhara Government as Red Armymen of the machine-gun detachment of the militia under Registan", and it was led by Akbarjan, Adbul Aziz and Adbul Ajan.[2] Another document indicated that those Indians served not only in the militia but also in the Army, and that there were seventy of them.[3]

The evidence just given of the attitude of the unorganised mass of Indian immigrants to Soviet government proves that the most revolutionary elements of the Indian

[1] ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 63, p. 3.

[2] Fradkin, "The Life of Foreign Colonies and Revolutionary Sections in Bukhara."

[3] A Letter of December 30, 1920 from an official of the Comintern's Turkestan Bureau, I. Kutuzov, to Yenikeyev and Tombasov in Bukhara.

people, who had risen to fight for their freedom, saw Soviet Russia as a lodestar, strove to establish contact with her, and counted on her support and assistance. Fazil Al Qadir (apparently, a member of the Indian Revolutionary Association), speaking on August 24, 1920 at a meeting in Baku where he had arrived from Tashkent for the Congress of the Peoples of the East, declared: "The Muslims of India are burning with the hope for aid from Soviet Russia ... and they find an alliance with Soviet Russia to be the only right thing for all the Muslims of the world." Another Indian delegate, Nazir closed his speech by saying: "Help from Russia is our salvation."[1] Lenin said: "...Even in India, where three hundred million people are oppressed and treated as labourers by the British, minds are awakening and the revolutionary movement is growing from day to day. They all look towards one star, the star of the Soviet Republic, because they know that it made tremendous sacrifices in order to fight the imperialists, and that it has withstood the most severe trials."[2]

The mode of behaviour and activities of the Indian émigrés in Soviet Russia clearly showed that it was the October Revolution and Soviet realities that inspired in hundreds upon hundreds of representatives of the masses of India "an urge for independent political thinking and independent political action".[3] This urge for independent political thinking brought some of the Indian immigrants into direct revolutionary action, and into armed battles against the enemies of Soviet government, and to a more or less clear understanding that to defend the Soviets meant fighting for the liberation of the East.

Yet, for all that, one can by no means consider all Indian revolutionary émigrés in Soviet Russia or even their greater part as having been committed to participating in the October revolution and in the Civil War and fighting to assert the power of workers and peasants or even having been ready to fight for it. There were such people among the Indians, their number rose all the time, but they were never in the majority.

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[1] *Kommunist*, Baku, August 26, 1920, p. 1.

[2] V. I. Lenin, "Speech Delivered at the First All-Russia Congress of Working Cossacks, March 1, 1920", *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, 1977, p. 151.

[3] V. I. Lenin, "The Second Congress of the Communist International", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 75.

The Kerki episode recounted earlier on serves to illustrate this point. It follows from the recollections of Rafiq Ahmad[1] and Shaukat Usmani that no more than twenty-five to thirty out of the eighty-nine Indians had participated in defence battles, and as few as three in offensive engagements. Yet another thing which has to be borne in mind is that involvement in defensive engagements was a life-or-death issue not only for the garrison of the fort, but for all the Indian travellers who were inside. The threat in offensive engagements, receded for those who stayed on in the fort but increased for those who chased the retreating enemy.

Some remarks have to be made also about the Indians who served with the Bukhara militia. Only for an insignificant number of the Indians in militia service at Bukhara was it important to see the Bukhara Government supported by Moscow and evolving towards the Soviet political system. What was more essential for the majority, as noted by the leader of the Bukhara Indians, Akbarjan, was that "the government in Bukhara is Islamic" and that, in his opinion, it had nothing to do with the Communists but was ready to help the Indians.[2]

For the rest, however, the Socialist character of Soviet government and the Communist substance of its programme were accepted and supported by a minority of the immigrants. Most of them could never bring themselves to accept Socialist change and were unable to discard their ingrained petty-proprietory notions generated by a backward colonial society. For example, the first secretary of the Indian Revolutionary Association, Amin Farukh, who found himself in Moscow early in 1921, was discouraged by what he saw as novelties in the Soviet capital. "Life in Moscow," he wrote, "is something terrible, no market, no stores, everything belongs to the State, no private property, and nobody has the right to have it." (CPA IML.)

Indian immigrants had brought with them—and, of course, they could not but bring with them—all those prejudices that had been produced by centuries of a caste-bedevilled system and fanatical profession of religion. The

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[1] See: Muzaffar Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India and Its Formation Abroad*, pp. 26-27.

[2] A report by V. Perelman to the Indian Revolutionary Committee in Tashkent on March 12, 1921.

fact of some of them belonging to superior castes was, to a certain extent, the reason why some of the Tashkent group had flatly refused to engage in productive work.[1] M. N. Roy rightfully said at that time (December 1920), addressing a meeting of Indians in Tashkent, that their "revolutionary consciousness is not profound enough for them to understand that to work for rebuilding Russia means working for a world revolution".[2]

"It was very difficult to drag oneself from the lumber-room of religion, because it is there that all the nationalist movements in the Eastern countries had been conceived and hatched," said Manmathnath Gupta, one of distinguished revolutionaries of India. The Indian revolutionaries, he went on to say, "admired the Russian revolution and all that followed, but they refused to touch the Marxist philosophy that inspired the Russian revolution."[3]

The revolutionary commitment of the overwhelming majority of Indian immigrants, both organised and unorganised, was national in character, with inescapable dose of national selfishness and limitation, yet all that has been said by no means by way of rebuking the Indian revolutionary émigrés for their position had been conditioned by the level of social and economic development of colonial Indian society. Lenin wrote on that subject: "The more backward the country, the stronger is the hold of small-scale agricultural production, patriarchalism and isolation, which inevitably lend particular strength and tenacity to the deepest of petty-bourgeois prejudices, i. e., to national egoism and national narrow-mindedness."[4] Lenin also warned that "those prejudices cannot but die very hard".[5]

However, the presence of hundreds of Indian immigrants in Soviet Russia and their direct contact with the multieth-

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[1] Prativadi Acharya wrote later on (July 22, 1921) that "many were not fit for or could not, engage in (productive) work because of all kinds of class or professional prejudices". (CPA IML.)

[2] "Report Made by Comrade Roy at the General Meeting of Indian Revolutionaries and Emigrants Called at the Request of the Comintern's Turkestan Bureau" (ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 488, p. 7).

[3] M. Gupta, "Glorious October Revolution Through Revolutionaries' Eyes", *New Age*, October 8, 1967, p. 11.

[4] V. I. Lenin, "Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 150.

[5] Ibid.

nic revolutionary people and day-to-day mingling with Russian Communists, who did their best to influence them ideologically, accelerated the gradual deliverance of some Indian revolutionaries from the grip of national limitations. That was best to be seen from the appearance of Communist elements among the Indian immigrants and in the incipient espousal of the principles of proletarian internationalism by some of them. In that way, some of the Indian national revolutionaries were joining the Communist movement which was rising at the time among the nationals from Eastern countries in Soviet Russia.

Chapter II

The Emergence of the Communist Movement Among the Working People from Foreign Eastern Nations in Soviet Russia. The Role of Lenin and the Comintern in the Marxist Education of Asia's First Communists

There was a certain peculiarity about the impact of the October Revolution on the Eastern countries bordering on the Soviet Republic. As I said earlier on, it arose from the fact that in 1917 and in subsequent years there were at least a million foreign nationals, primarily working people from China, Korea, Persia and Turkey, living and working on the territory of Russia. These were mostly seasonal workers—ruined peasants, destitute workers and, above all, pauperised proletarians who had come to Russia in search of a job and a living. Among them there were thousands of dispossessed Chinese who had been recruited for front-line work during World War I as well as some recent prisoners of war—63,000 former soldiers and officers of the Turkish Army and some other categories of the population of Oriental countries.[1] All of them were eyewitnesses of the October Revolution and the Civil War. Of course, they, too, coming as they did from oppressed nations of Asia, most readily accepted and supported the national liberation and democratic sections of the programme of the October Revolution. But, working side by side with Russian workers, they assimilated their sentiments and became receptive to their ideas and took an important step forward towards seeing things right in their true perspective. Many of them began to understand that to fight for Soviet government and against the foreign invasion and the Whiteguards

[1] For more on it, see: M. A. Persits, "Eastern Internationalists in Russia and Some Questions of the National Liberation Movement (1918-July 1920)", *The Comintern and the East*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979, pp. 71-84.

meant fighting for the liberation of their own countries from colonial oppression. Moreover, a smaller, yet most advanced contingent of the working people from Eastern foreign nations in Soviet Russia were becoming receptive not only to the anti-colonialist ideas of the October Revolution but to its socialist slogans as well. What brought that all out most tangibly and conclusively was that scores of thousands of them were active in the armed struggles against the Whiteguards and invaders to defend the Soviet political system. The Socialist programme of the October Revolution had a direct effect on the peoples of Eastern countries contiguous to Russia and that effect was greater than the impact the Revolution had on the Indians who had no massive representation of their own in Soviet Russia at first.

Bolsheviks' Internationalist Work with the Toiling People of Foreign Eastern Nations

The natural influence of the ideas of the Great October Revolution and subsequent development of the Soviet political system was greatly intensified through the large-scale political and organising work the Bolsheviks carried on among the émigré workers from adjoining Eastern countries. The Bolsheviks were propagating the ideas of Socialism and anti-colonialism and worked towards rallying the vanguard revolutionary forces of the East and bringing them together to form Communist groups. As proletarian internationalists, they deemed that work to be their duty and, at the same time, their interest as it was reducing the strength of imperialism and augmenting that of the newborn Soviet state. That is to say that even before the founding of the Comintern, Soviet Communists had started full-scale internationalist propaganda work among people from foreign countries in Russia. Speaking at the First Congress of the Communist International in March 1919, Otto Kuusinen said that from the start "revolutionary Russia has, as a matter of fact, acted as a new International for over a year".[1]

A Federation of Foreign Communists was set up under the auspices of the Central Committee of the Russian Com-

[1] *The First Congress of the Communist International*, Petrograd, 1921, p. 93 (in Russian).

munist Party (Bolsheviks) in Moscow as early as May 1918. It brought together numerous Communist groups which had sprung up among former war prisoners from Western and Eastern Europe. It was the Central Bureau of Communist Organisations of Oriental Nations that directed Communist work—propaganda and organisation—among Asian working people in Soviet Russia. At first, it was called the Central Bureau of the Muslim Organisations of the RCP(B). Technically, the Bureau was constituted in December 1918, although its leading group had shaped up and started working as early as January that year. Apart from central organisations, political work with citizens from Oriental countries in the places of their greatest concentration—in the Caucasus, in South Russia, Central Asia, Siberia and in the Far East—was carried on by the Party's district and provincial bodies as well as by the territorial divisions of the RCP(B) Central Committee. In January 1920, the Siberian Bureau of the RCP(B) Central Committee set up the so-called Siberian Mission for Foreign Affairs in Eastern Siberia and in Contiguous Countries, headed by Vladimir Vilensky-Sibiryakov. The mission also conducted revolutionary political work among the Chinese, Korean, and Mongolian communities in Russia. The extension of that kind of activity required the establishment of a special body, and on April 24, 1920 the Siberian Mission set up an Eastern Bureau.[1] The draft statute of that Bureau said that its object was to "contribute towards liberating the peoples of the Far East and Central Asia from the oppression and enslavement by world imperialism through preparing and organising a merciless revolutionary struggle in Oriental countries against the imperialist Powers and the colonial-imperialist system..."[2] Shortly afterwards, the Eastern Bureau's functions passed to a new special body. A sector for Eastern peoples was set up by the Siberia Bureau of the RCP(B) Central Committee in Irkutsk on July, 15, 1920.[3] In January 1921, the sector was closed down, but its staff were used to man a Far Eastern Secretariat of the Comintern that was established in the same city.[4] A large amount of work was carried on among Koreans

[1] CPA IML.
[2] Ibidem.
[3] *Narody Dalnego Vostoka*, No. 2, 1921, p. 176 (in Russian).
[4] CPA IML, s. 17, r. 65, f. 322, p. 8, and also s. 17, r. 13, f. 905, p. 2.

and Chinese by Communists of the Far Eastern Republic. The Far Eastern Bureau of the RCP(B) Central Committee set up special Korean propaganda sectors attached to provincial and district Party committees where there were many Korean citizens,[1] and Chinese sectors in areas with large numbers of Chinese.

Back at the beginning of 1919, the RCP(B) Territorial Committee in Tashkent had an agency to conduct propaganda work among Persians, Turks, Afghans, Chinese, Uigurs, and Indians. Later on, the Commission for Turkestan of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee set up a special propaganda subdivision to this end, and on December 23 the same year it decided on creating a Council for International Propaganda.[2] The leader of Turkish Communists, Mustafa Subhi was elected Chairman of Sovinterprop (Russian abbreviation for the Council) on February 6, 1920.[3] The Council was to "unite all the available revolutionary organisations of contiguous countries operating both in and outside Turkestan". The Council assumed the function of "directing the work of national sections and central governing bodies of revolutionary parties of Eastern nations in Soviet Turkestan". It set itself the task of organising Communist cells and revolutionary elements from countries adjoining Turkestan. The Council strove to "link the Russian Revolution up with the movement of oppressed working masses of the East and make the slogans produced by the Russian proletariat plain and clear to the working masses of Persia, India, Bukhara, etc.[4] The Council carried on effective propaganda, both spoken and printed, and sponsored meetings, discussions, and lectures. It put out propaganda literature in five languages —Farsi, Turkish, Uzbek, Urdu and English. The Council strove to "train clear and able agitators and organisers in the East."[5] It was an international organisation as it comprised, at top level, not only representatives of local RCP(B) organisations but also of those national Communist groups that were shaping up in Turkestan.

Similar work was carried on by the Council for Propa-

[1] CPA IML, s. 372, r. 1, f. 1094, p. 36.
[2] CPA IML, s. 122, r. 1, f. 29, p. 261.
[3] CPA IML, s. 544, r. 1, f. 4.
[4] CPA IML, s. 122, r. 1, f. 29, pp. 261-263; s. 544, r. 1, f. 10, pp. 21, 23.
[5] CPA IML, s. 122, r. 1, f. 29, p. 268.

ganda and Action in Baku, a Comintern agency created in September 1920 at the First Congress of the Peoples of the East. On November 2, 1920 the Council opened short-term advanced courses to train Eastern nationals as agitators and propagandists. Twenty out of 40-odd students were Turks and fourteen, Persians. The *Kommunist* newspaper of Baku wrote at the time that the courses would be "the first nursery of revolutionary and Communist ideas in the East".[1] The Council even planned to create a University of Social Sciences for Eastern revolutionaries. A considerable amount of internationalist activity was carried on by the Eastern Department of the Odessa Provincial Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks), mostly among the Turkish working people,[2] as well as by some local Party organisations.

Courses and schools for Eastern citizens in Russia were created not only in Baku but also in Tashkent, Irkutsk and some other cities which had many Chinese, Koreans, Turks, Persians and other nationals of adjacent Asian countries. It was not only at the courses, but elsewhere, indeed, wherever it was possible and necessary, that Soviet Communists carried on political work among the working people from the East in the hope that they, once back home, would tell their compatriots about the Land of Soviets and its Socialist ideals, and would earnestly commit themselves to the Communist and national liberation movements in their countries. A very interesting and typical in this respect was the order of the day by the Commander of the 3rd Siberian Infantry Division which comprised many Chinese and Koreans and even a Korean-Chinese regiment. That document, dated August 22, 1920, read: "I hereby call on all the commanding staff to gain an appropriate understanding and to begin most active work among the Chinese and Korean Red Armymen in order to train them as earnest fighters and future carriers of the ideas of Communism in Korea and China... This requires most intensive work, both military and political, cultural and educational. I hope that the commanding officers and Red Armymen will get down as one to this creative job and will stand firm, rifle in hand, at their posts ... until all parasites have

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[1] *Kommunist*, Baku, November 1, 1920.
[2] *Kommunist*, Baku, October 12, 1920.

been ground to dust and wiped off the face of the earth. This order shall be translated into Chinese and Korean and read out and posted in all units."[1]

The Beginning of the Communist Movement Among Citizens from Foreign Eastern Nations

So the influence of the October Revolution, promoted by the Bolsheviks, produced a Communist movement among Eastern nationals in Russia. It was the revolutionaries who were among the Turkish prisoners of war that showed themselves very active in it.[2] Mustafa Subhi was the most outstanding among them. As early as 1910 he joined the Socialist Party of Turkey, which had just been founded, and, once in Soviet Russia, he became a Communist. As early as June 1918, Mustafa Subhi, assisted by local Soviet administration and Party bodies, called a conference of Turkish internationalist Socialists out of former POWs in Kazan. A more representative one was held in Moscow, in July. These conferences, having united Turkish Socialists in Russia, spawned the Communist movement of Turkey. The Moscow Conference elected the Central Committee of the Turkish Party of Socialist Communists and set up a Propaganda Committee. The task before them was to make preparations for the creation of a national Communist Party and, in particular, to do so at home in order to bring about a representative congress with most of the delegates coming from Turkey. That was a sure course which meant rejecting all haste in so difficult a job and implying the recognition of the need for a Communist movement to be developed in Turkey proper at the same time. The constituent congress of the Turkish Communist Party was held in September 1920, when there was already a considerable number of Communist organisations and groups among the Turkish working people in Soviet Russia, and, especially, in Turkey.

Iranian working people who were in Russia and a small proportion of their advanced elements had been joining the Social-Democratic movement for quite a long time,

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[1] CPA IML, s. 495, r. 154, f. 20, p. 13.

[2] For details, see: M. A. Persits, "Turkish Internationalists in Russia", *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 5, 1976.

under the direct influence of the 1905 Russian Revolution and the activities of the Trans-Caucasian Bolsheviks. The Iranian Social-Democratic Party, Adalat, was formed in Baku in 1916. However, it was under the decisive impact of the Great October Revolution that it obtained a certain base among advanced Iranian seasonal workers who had had their training as proletarians. Adalat cells were springing up little by little, with a lot of problems to cope with, in Persia proper—in Senjan, Resht, Ardabil, Meshhed, Astar.[1] One factor that held up that process was the absence of an industrial proletariat. As to the seasonal workers who had returned from Russia, a great proportion of them, having found themselves once more in the semifeudal environment of Iran, lost some of the proletarian political consciousness and the knack for proletarian struggle they had acquired abroad. To begin with they were separated and dispersed throughout the land, settling in numerous villages and towns with little or no industry to keep in them anything like their former contact which presented them with great revolutionary opportunities. The former seasonal workers once again became peasants in bondage, and often pauperised proletarians or just paupers, sometimes long-shoremen, miners and seldom artisans. (This is essentially true also of the groups of Chinese and Korean nationals who went home from Russia subsequently.) Late in June 1920, the Iranian Communists held their first congress in Enzeli where Adalat was reorganised into the Communist Party of Iran.

There were Chinese and Koreans, too, among those who were actively involved in the Communist movement which had drawn in thousands of foreign workers in revolutionary Russia. It is in Soviet Russia that the first Chinese and Korean Communists appeared, as members of the RCP(B). Communist cells began to be formed from 1918 onwards within the framework of the associations of Chinese workers which existed in as many as 12 cities of the RSFSR by late 1920. The Irkutsk League of Chinese Workers laid it down in its Short-Term Programme that "the first and immediate object of the mass work among the League's mem-

[1] CPA IML, s. 544, r. 3, f. 45, p. 31; r. 1, f. 19, p. 24; see also: A. Sultan Zade, "The Communist Party of Iran", *The Communist International*, No. 13, 1920, which has important and convincing material mixed with some unfounded claims about the Iranian Communist movement.

bership is to create a solid and staunch nucleus of Chinese Communists, the prospective vanguard of the Chinese revolution for which purpose it is necessary ... to form a Communist cell". Communist cells were created in military units and formations. For example, the international Korean-Chinese Regiment of the 3rd Siberian Infantry Division had thirty full members of the RCP(B) and 120 probation members in August 1920. There were territorial associations of Chinese Communists as well. One was known as the Chinese Communist Party of the Amur Region, a Chinese Communist group in Blagoveschensk.[1] A special centre had to be set up because of the growing number of Chinese Communists within the RCP(B) and the peculiarity and complexity of the work that had to be done with them. It was the Central Organising Bureau of Chinese Communists that was formed under the auspices of the RCP(B) Central Committee on July I, 1920,[2] which set out to lead all ideological, educational and organising work among them.

Communist groups among Korean nationals began to spring up in the Russian Far East in 1919. There were some 20 Korean Party organisations in Soviet Russia by late 1920 comprising 2,305 full and probationary members.[3] The Korean Communists' activities in the Soviet Far East were directed by special departments of regional RCP(B) committees and headed by the Korean Section of the Far Eastern Bureau of the RCP(B) Central Committee.[4]

Korean Communists strove to create their own national Communist Party. They did take a step forward in this direction when two Korean community organisations—the Union of Korean Socialists and the Union of New Citizens held a joint congress at Vladivostok in April 1919, to launch

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[1] See: M. A. Persits, "Chinese Revolutionary Organisations on the Territory of the Far Eastern Republic and Sun Yat-sen", in *Sun Yat-sen. 1866-1966. Collected Articles, Reminiscences, Records.* Ed. by S. L. Tikhvinsky, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1966, pp. 356-363 (in Russian).

[2] V. M. Ustinov, "Chinese Communist Organisations in Soviet Russia (1918-1920)", in *Chinese Volunteers in Battles for Soviet Government*, Vostochnaya Literatura Publishers, Moscow, 1961, p. 42 (in Russian).

[3] Estimated by this author from rather incomplete information of *Narody Dalnego Vostoka*, No. 2, 1921, Irkutsk, pp. 212-217.

[4] S. A. Tsypkin, "Korean Working People in the Struggle Against Invaders in the Soviet Far East (1918-1922)", *Voprosy istorii*, No. 11, 1957, p. 175.

the Korean Socialist Party which joined the Comintern.[1]

The first Communist groups formed by Oriental workers in Soviet Russia did a lot of explaining and organising among their compatriots. For example, Mustafa Subhi and his associates carried on a large amount of work to make arrangements for the constituent congress of their party. Agitators were at work in various cities of the country where large groups of former Turkish prisoners of war had concentrated. They explained the meaning of the events which were taking place in Russia and taught their students to accept the ideas of Socialism and trained them for revolutionary struggles at home. Serious propaganda was conducted, both orally and in print, to lay bare the policy of imperialism in Asia. At the same time, the major works of Marx and Lenin as well as other material were translated into many languages. Bilateral links were established and carefully fostered between the Eastern Communist groups in Russia and revolutionary forces in Asian countries. They contributed towards extending the revolutionising influence of the October Revolution on Eastern nations and expedited the process of the development of the Communist movement in those countries. For example, Chinese Communists in the Russian Far East often sent their representatives to see Sun Yatsen, and revolutionaries in Shanghai and other cities of China. I have already said that national revolutionaries were regularly coming to Soviet Russia from China. Besides Qu Qiubo, who had arrived in Russia late in 1920, Zhang Tailei was another one who arrived in Irkutsk on March 21, 1921. On the following day, he was appointed Secretary of the Chinese Sector of the Far Eastern Secretariat of the Comintern. He took part in Communist work among the Chinese and Korean communities in the Soviet Far East. Liu Shaoqi, Peng Shuzhi, Luo Jue, Reng Bishi and many other Chinese followers of Marxism arrived in Soviet Russia to study.[2] Some Com-

[1] Djishun Pak (Pak Din Shun), "The Socialist Movement in Korea", *Communist International*, No. 7-8, 1919, p. 1173.

[2] See: Yu. Kostin, "Two Perceptions of the October Revolution in China", *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 5, 1967, p. 79; Chang Kuo-tao, *The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party. 1921-1927*, Vol. I, Lawrence, Manhattan, Wichita, 1971, p. 128; M. A. Persits, "From the History of the Communist Party of China", *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 4, 1971, pp. 47-49; idem., "Eastern Internationalists in Russia and Some Questions of the National Liberation Movement. (1918-July 1920)", *The Comintern and the East*, Progress Publishers, 1979, pp. 82-83.

munists came quite often from Istanbul and Ankara to Baku to contact the Central Bureau of the Turkish Communist Organisations. The regular repatriation of Eastern nationals started by the Soviet authorities as early as 1918 did much to maintain bilateral links between revolutionary forces.[1] That was a subject of great concern as it was the imperative and perfectly justified desire of foreign working people who had been outside their own native lands for years. At the same time, the repatriation was an effective means of propagating the ideas of national self-determination and Socialism in the Orient. The Soviet authorities provided the repatrees with food, clothes and money, and gave them a formal send-off. For example, the Chief of the Eastern Department of the Siberian Bureau pointed out in a special address to the Irkutsk Provincial Revolutionary Committee and the Political Department of the 5th Army (comprising the Korean-Chinese regiment): "A partial repatriation of Chinese workers who have stayed in Russia from three to six years without leaving is now taking place, and it will be systematic with the removal of the Daur bottleneck [that is, with the liberation of the Eastern Trans-Baikal Region from invaders and Whiteguards—*M. P.*]. These Chinese workers experienced all the revolutionary hardship in a foreign country", and the Siberian Bureau called for action to "improve the provision of food for those who were leaving, let their trains pass without delay and organise an official send-off for them".[2] That was just the kind of send-off given to the citizens of the East in various Soviet borderland areas. Several thousand former Turkish POWs assembled in Baku in October 1920. From there they were seen off to Turkey after "being provided with all they needed". There were concerts, meetings, lectures and well-wishing speeches at the send-off ceremonies.[3]

The massive repatriation of Eastern workers from revolutionary Russia frightened the colonialists like hell. Washington expressed that fear in no uncertain terms. Late in 1919, the U. S. Department of State, in its correspondence with a British representative on the prospective return of the Chinese, said that it "seriously questions the

[1] *Volya truda*, November 30, 1918, p. 3.
[2] CPA IML, s. 495, r. 154, f. 34, p. 122.
[3] *Kommunist*, Baku, October 6 and 15, 1920, p. 3.

advisability of assisting at this time of the return to China of Chinese workmen and coolies who have been under the influence of the Bolshevik rule in Russia".[1]

The Communist movement, which had emerged among Oriental working people in Soviet Russia under the influence of the October Revolution developed revolutionary views which implied defence of Soviet Russia against invaders and uncompromising struggle against foreign imperialism and, at the same time, against "their own" national bourgeoisie. That is to say that it was typical of the pioneer Communists of the East to fail to understand or to ignore the important distinctions which existed between the social and economic conditions of the independent advanced and medium-developed capitalist countries and the precapitalist conditions of most of the oppressed nations of Asia. The early Eastern Communists were, therefore, left-sectarian in their views on the major issues of the strategy and tactics of the Communist movement in the East: they denied the bourgeois democratic character of the prospective revolutions in Asian countries, declared themselves committed to Socialist revolutions, did not acknowledge the revolutionary potential of the national bourgeoisie which led them to reject the idea of cooperating with it in an anti-imperialist bloc. Painstaking and sustained work with the masses was replaced by a reckless idea of having a revolutionary war organised with the help of the Soviet Armed Forces and so on and so forth.

All those signs of the infantile disorder of "leftism" were peculiar to most of the early Communists in the Asian countries adjoining Russia. And so they were to the Indians who had also joined the Communist movement which was then developing among Eastern nationals in Soviet Russia.

A fairly large group of Indian émigrés shaped up in the Soviet Republic at a later date, that is, in the second half of 1920, and in a different way from the thousands of immigrants from China, Korea, Iran and Turkey who had been in Russia since before the Revolution and consisted principally of seasonal workers and POWs (Turks). Of course, there were some revolutionaries among them, but, for the most part, they arrived later, attracted by the Great Octo-

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[1] See: *U. S. Department of State. Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1919*, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1937, p. 193.

ber Revolution and driven by a desire to study the revolutionary experience and Socialist practice of the Soviets.

Indian émigrés, few though they were, had been active in the major revolutionary battles to free their country from the colonial yoke. They were representative, comprising as they did not only individual revolutionaries but entire delegations from the national revolutionary organisations of India.

Beside the bulk of the Iranian seasonal workers or Chinese workmen who were living in Russia, Indians were distinguished by a fairly high standard of education. Finally, the very arrival of Indians in Soviet Russia in the wake of the Great October Revolution was a well-considered and important act in their struggle for the freedom of the nation and clearly expressed the tremendous impact which the Russian Revolution had on India and on the East, in general.

Indian Revolutionaries Adopting Marxism-Leninism

Indian national revolutionaries, few though they were, who had succeeded in grasping the sum and substance of the Russian Revolution and become, in consequence, committed to Communist ideals, began to arrive in the Soviet Republic in the latter half of 1920.

Manabendra Nath Roy (1889-1954), who is rightfully considered to have been the first Indian Communist, arrived in Moscow in May or June 1920.[1] He had been delegated to the Second Congress of the Communist International by the Mexican Communist Party, founded in 1919 with his leading participation.

A die-hard nationalist revolutionary until recently, as he called himself later on, young Roy had started his active struggle against the domination of India by British imperialism even before World War I. He was a member of a secret revolutionary terrorist organisation, Anushilan Samiti, in West Bengal. In 1915, that organisation sent Roy off on a long foreign tour through the countries of the Pacific to get arms and have them shipped to India. That was an element of preparations for the Indo-German action against Britain which Indian revolutionaries were pressing far. M. N. Roy had been to Jawa, Korea, Japan and China.

[1] S. G. Sardesai, *India and the Russian Revolution*, Communist Party Publication, New Delhi, 1967, p. 43.

He came to America in the summer of 1916 "as an emissary of revolutionary nationalism". It was there that he began to study the works of Marx and, as a result, as he wrote, he "accepted Socialism, except its materialist philosophy".[1] In hiding from American police persecution, he changed his name of Narendranath Bhattacharya to Manabendra Nath Roy and went to Mexico. It was there that he learned about the Great October Revolution. It produced a particularly great impression on left Socialists in that country and, under its influence, M. N. Roy took the next step in his ideological development, becoming a Communist.

Roy wrote that all Mexican left Socialists he found himself among decided at once to become Communists and lived in a state of great emotional tension and in an environment overloaded with great expectations. The same desire obsessed Roy, and he made "a sudden jump from die-hard nationalism to Communism". M. N. Roy explained that the speed and ease of this conversion were due to the Bolshevik programme on the issue of national relations. "Socialism," Roy pointed out, "appealed to me because of its anti-imperialist connotations." For that reason, "the road from revolutionary anti-imperialist nationalism to Communism was short".[2]

This appears to be a very important and interesting explanation as it reflected the real state of things that was typical not of M. N. Roy alone at all. The way the Indian national revolutionaries followed, as a rule, as they advanced towards Marxism, was not through the working-class movement—they had nothing to do with it at all and most of them still failed to understand its significance—but through the anti-imperialist national liberation struggle and through their sympathy with the Soviet system of government which had become the world's major anti-colonialist force and a real base of support for the liberation movement of the Eastern peoples. And it must have been only natural that the swiftness of accepting Marxism and even joining the Communist Party could not be matched by just as swift and complete recasting of the ideological and political views of national revolutionaries who had indulged in conspiratorial activities for years on end.

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[1] *M. N. Roy's Memoirs*, Allied Publishers Private Limited, Bombay, 1964, pp. 22, 29.
[2] Ibid., pp. 59-60.

That is why many of the Indian revolutionaries, having declared themselves Communists, still stuck to quite a few of their earlier concepts of petty-bourgeois revolutionism with its invariable components: disbelief in the capacity of the working class and the peasant masses for conscious political activity, virtual abandonment of mass work, an exaggerated sense of the role and significance of the military factor in preparing and making a Socialist revolution.

M. N. Roy pointed out in his memoirs that even after his swift change-over to Communist positions, he "culturally ... was still a nationalist: and cultural nationalism is a prejudice that dies very hard". He wrote: "As I realised later, the rapid progress was rather superficial". Roy rightfully remarked that not only he "experienced this psychological process, but many others subsequently underwent the miraculous transformation, and consequently corrupted Communism".[1] M. N. Roy, although he did have, at first, the reputation of being the most educated Marxist among the early Indian Communists, was nevertheless far from actually understanding the essence of the theory of scientific Communism. It was he who became the most distinct exponent of the "infantile disorder of 'leftism'" in the Communist movement of the East and put all left-sectarian arguments together as one system.

M. N. Roy came to Moscow in company of Abani Mukherji (1891-1937) who had since lived in the Soviet Union, worked for the Comintern, studied and became a scholar. Like Roy, Abani Mukherji began his revolutionary activities as a national revolutionary and as one involved in the Bengali terrorist movement. In 1916, he was arrested by the British authorities and put into a Singapore jail. In the autumn of 1917, he managed to escape in a fishing boat and take refuge in Indonesia (first in Sumatra, and then in Java), where he stayed, apparently, until late 1919. It was there that he heard about the October Revolution and came into contact with local revolutionaries of Dutch origin, some already adhering to the Marxist positions. With their help, he moved to Holland (Rotterdam) early in 1920, and then to Germany (Berlin). Having declared himself a Communist, he contacted the West European Bureau of the Comintern

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[1] *M. N. Roy's Memoirs*, pp. 59-60.

which sent him to Moscow to participate in the deliberations of the Communist International.[1]

Prativadi Acharya arrived in Tashkent from Kabul on July I, 1920, with a group of members of the Indian Revolutionary Association. Although Acharya was the second man, after Abdul Rabb Barq, in that national revolutionary group, he had declared himself a Communist even before his arrival in Tashkent, perhaps, even early in 1920, in Kabul.

It was in England in 1907-1908, while still at college, that Acharya embarked on revolutionary activities. In the closing years of World War I, he cooperated with the Indian Revolutionary Committee in Berlin.[2] In June 1917, Acharya went to Stockholm together with Chattopadhyaya, whose acquaintance he had made while still in England, to set up an Indian Bureau for revolutionary propaganda in India. It was in Sweden that Acharya heard of the October Revolution and publicly hailed it.[3] His ideological and political evolution was greatly influenced by his personal contact with Russian revolutionaries in exile, for instance, with a would-be Comintern official, Kirill Troyanovsky in Stockholm in 1917.[4]

The events that proved to be particularly important for Acharya were his arrival in Moscow in June or July 1919 (together with Mahendra Pratap and Abdur Rabb Barq), and the conversation with V. I. Lenin who received them all. The subsequent rather long contact with Soviet diplomats, Ya. Z. Surits and I. M. Reisner as they travelled to Kabul and during their stay in the Afghan capital contributed towards Acharya's subsequent ideological evolution. In any case, in a letter of June 24, 1921 to the Credentials Commission of the Third Congress of the Comintern, Acharya called himself a "confirmed Communist" and, in so

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[1] P. Unnikrishnan, "Indian Revolutionaries in the Soviet Union", *Link*, August 30, 1964, pp. 33-34; Gautam Chattopadhyaya, *Abani Mukherji, a Dauntless Revolutionary and Pioneering Communist*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1976, pp. III, 11, 12, and 15.

[2] *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol. I, pp. 17-18.

[3] V. Chattopadhyaya's Letter of June 25, 1921 to the Credentials Commission of the Third Congress of the Comintern (CPA IML, s. 490, r. 1, f. 208, p. 664).

[4] K. Troyanovsky's letter of August 25, 1921 to M. Pavlovich, Member of the ECCI Eastern Commission (ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 56, pp. 1-2).

doing, even referred to Ya. Z. Surits and I. M. Reisner as the men who, he claimed, had promised to recommend him for admission to the RCP. Having proclaimed himself a Communist, Acharya still had a nationalistic approach to many issues of principle.

Some other Indian revolutionaries who came to Soviet Turkestan from Kabul also positively viewed the Communist principles of the Soviet political system. Of the 84 questionnaires I have studied, three or four revealed Communist sympathies. For example, the 23-year-old Abdul Majid wrote in his answers that he "heartily agreed with the Communist Programme". It is rather interesting to note that he came from a Kashmir tradesman's family and was a clerical worker by his social status, had incomplete higher education, and went in for revolutionary work since 1915.

The 23-year-old Nisar Mohammad of Peshawar declared that "if the Communist principles are honestly carried, the whole world will be free". His father was a landowner, and he had secondary education and was still studying before he joined the revolutionary movement in 1916. That man became a Communist in Soviet Russia, and stayed on in this country for the rest of his life and subsequently worked much as Party and government official. He was appointed to the post of Minister of Education of the Tajik Soviet Republic, and later on changed over to research.[1]

The lot and mood of another Indian, Ghulam Ahmad, apparently, an ex-*muhajirin*, point to the Indian revolutionaries' growing sympathy for Soviet government and gradual acceptance of the principles of Socialism. There is a report on him by a British Intelligence Service informer, Atanas Jovanović, a Serbian, who had been spying in Turkestan since Czarist times and occasionally crossed into Iran.[2] On April 22, 1922, Jovanović talked to Ghulam Ahmad at the British consulate hospital in Meshhed where he had been admitted because he fell ill on his way back to India from Russia. "I was greatly surprised," Jovanović wrote, "when he said that 'there is a very good Red Army in Russia, the best in the world' and that 'Russia is a free country'." Ghulam Ahmad said that he had been through prop-

[1] P. Unnikrishnan, "Indian Revolutionaries in the Soviet Union", *Link*, September 27, 1964, p. 33.
[2] SACSA, s. 110, r. 3, f. 925, p. 1.

aganda courses at Tashkent and Moscow and he was enruptured with the freedom he received in Russia. Then the informer put a provocative question to him: "You, of course, do not want India to have such 'freedom' as is in Russia?" The cautious reply was: "We would be happy without the English..." And after a moment's reflection, Ghulam Ahmad added: "Afterwards I will go back to Russia as Russia is a good place to be in." The informer asked why Ahmad did not attach the word "Khan" to his name. He replied: "I live in the Soviet fashion and recognise no prince —no Khan".[1]

A 22-year-old student of Punjab University, Abdul Qwayum (his father was a railway inspector) wrote that he accepted the Russian Communist programme. (CPA IML.) Abdul Qwayum's road to Communism was also highly characteristic of the nationalist-minded young people who suddenly experienced the effect of the October Revolution. It must have been at the University that he managed to get to know some of the ideas of Socialism which attracted him very much. Anxious as he was to find a way of fighting for his country's liberation, he was about to emigrate in 1919 to the United States to join the Ghadar Party over there. Yet he could not do so and later in the year he joined the Caliphate organisation. In March 1920, he was briefly detained for his anti-British activities. Shortly afterwards, on May 13, 1920, he left India, having joined the exodus campaign "on instructions from the Caliphate Revolutionary Council". The Caliphate Revolutionary Council's instructions fit in perfectly with his own secret and passionate desire to get into Soviet Russia. This is quite certain as one can see from all of Qwayum's subsequent moves and acts as shown by documentary evidence. Together with other *muhajirins*, Qwayum arrived in Kabul from whence he, with a group comprising Shaukat Usmani and Rafiq Ahmad, went to Soviet Turkestan. There is one noteworthy episode in the life of émigrés in Turkestan that is associated with the name of Abdul Qwayum. Indian revolutionaries, once they turned up on Soviet soil, clashed in heated debates about Socialism which often split them into small groups

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[1] National Archives of India. Foreign and Political Department, File 359-M, 1923, Mid-Asia, Secret, No. 11, p. 22. This author is grateful to L. V. Mitrokhin for having kindly offered him the document from the Indian archives just quoted.

of partisans of Socialist principles. That was what happened in Termez in August 1920, where one of such debates took place. There was "quite a clash" between them, as an official of the Council for International Propaganda reported. As a result, the Indians broke into two groups: a "nationalist majority" led by Mamed Akbar, a landowner's son, and a minority (22) "Communist trend" headed by Abdul Qwayum.

Once in Soviet Turkestan Abdul Qwayum, to judge by all accounts, got down to an independent study of Marxism and, early in 1921, ventured to write a pamphlet in English which he called "Indian Workers and Peasants. A Handbook". There is a summary of that book made on April 13, 1921 by an official translator of the Comintern's Turkestan Bureau, Levkievsky. The pamphlet consisted of seven chapters. In Chapter One "The Origin of the Capitalist and Working Classes. A Study of Our Past and Present", the author speaks of "the gradual transition from the clan system to the modern State and to the establishment of an absolute monarchy" and, evidently, of the origin of the present social classes. Chapter Two is headlined "From Absolute Monarchy to the Imperialist and Capitalist Form of Government. Capitalism in Development". Chapter Three is about "Our Economic Conditions, Past and Present". Speaking of India's wealth, the author emphasises that it has been created by the industry of "peasants and workers" who, nevertheless, "starve and cannot afford to have their children educated". The wealth they have created is spent unproductively "for coronation festivities, huge clerical salaries and gifts to capitalist children". Chapter Four is entitled "The Working Class Is No Longer a Slave of Capitalism. The Road to Your Success". In it, the author speaks about the unbearable living conditions for the working people and tells workers and peasants that they must "drop the idea" that "such a life has been preordained for them. Every workman has the right to live just like his master lives". Chapter Five is entitled "Whither This Road?" Chapter Six is "The Merits of Communism and Demerits of Capitalism". Chapter Seven is about "Our Life As It Must Be Under Communism". The author maintains that there are two kinds of Socialists: (a) national Socialists who are, in fact, nationalists, and (b) internationalist Socialists. The latter are the only ones who have "proved the possibility of ending ... the social and economic

troubles" of workers and peasants. Setting out the sum and substance of the Communist doctrine, the author maintains that it calls for "the overthrow of the power of imperialism, and capitalism, and rejects the right of capital to private property", because "labour produces everything, while capital does nothing but robs labour". The author closes by urging India's workers and peasants to follow the example of the Russian workers. He writes: "If you do not want to stay under the barbaric yoke ... of the capitalists, then rise and aid yourselves, you are 300 million, while only one-tenth of the Indians, if organised into an army, can conquer the whole world." Even this rather brief summary provides an insight into the thinking of a budding Communist who has just discovered the fair wisdom of Marxism and carried away by it, wants to lose no time to tell the masses how to achieve liberation from all forms of oppression. In doing so, the author, by instinct, moves to left revolutionary positions. He sincerely and exultantly urges an emulation of Russian experience in India and an immediate Socialist revolution which he conceives as an armed rising by a people's army and, of course, he cannot even imagine the possibility of temporary cooperation with the national bourgeoisie at a certain stage of the revolution. From Abdul Qwayum's Party membership card, discovered in archives, we find that he joined the Party on April 11, 1921, that is, when he had just finished writing the pamphlet. In all probability, the coincidence of these two events of great importance to Qwayum was not accidental. The pamphlet brought him to the closing stage of a long process of his political self-determination. That is just why, in replying to the question in the Party membership card: "What has made you join the Communist Party?", Abdul Qwayum wrote: "A study of Marx and Engels." Subsequently, Abdul Qwayum, just like Nisar Mohammad, adopted Soviet citizenship. He served as a Red Army commander in the city of Kalinin, and shared in rebuilding railway transport and industry.[1]

Shaukat Usmani is another man who passed from nationalism to Communism and was no less typical of Indian revolutionary youth who decided to devote themselves

[1] Masood Ali Khan, "Recalling Days Indians Fought Shoulder to Shoulder with Soviet People for Revolution", *New Age*, October 1, 1967, p. 8.

to the struggle to rid India from colonialism. "My hatred for British rule," he wrote in 1922, "was born together with myself. In childhood, I nurtured revolutionary ideas and when I was 12, I swore to avenge myself. At 19, I joined the secret Mainpuri organisation which set out to overthrow British rule in India. But there was a traitor in the organisation. He knew some 20 members. They were seized with some ammunition. Some of them were hanged and others exiled for life to the Andaman Islands. That was in 1919. I had wild ideas racing in my head." (CPA IML.) The young man was painfully looking for ways to liberate his native land. And when he learned about the October Revolution and Soviet government, which proclaimed its readiness to support the liberation struggle of oppressed peoples, he decided that it was in revolutionary Russia that one had to seek an answer to the questions that agitated his mind. It was at that point that the exodus movement began and he, naturally, joined it. "Together with my comrades," Usmani writes, "I decided to go to Afghanistan to see if I could do any work from that territory." Once in Afghanistan, however, the *muhajirins* soon realised that Kabul no longer felt like putting up a determined fight against British imperialism. "Therefore," Usmani said, "we started ... a propaganda campaign for everybody to go north and I was the main instigator" of the march into Russia. After October 22, 1920, the *muhajirins* arrived in Tashkent to discover two rival groups of their fellow countrymen: the Indian Revolutionary Association and the Communist group of M. N. Roy. "So I, together with some lettered comrades, were in a tricky situation. We did not know whom to join." Shaukat Usmani wrote further on that for two days he had been collecting information about the feuding factions. That proved to be enough for him to reject the Association and choose cooperation with Roy's All-India Provisional Revolutionary Committee which adhered to left revolutionary positions. However, it took him over six months more to study Marxist theory and Soviet policy before making up his mind to join the Communist Party. That happened in Moscow, apparently in the middle of 1921.

There were some other Indians coming to Turkestan as representatives of national revolutionary organisations, such as the Provisional Government of India in exile, who adopted Communist philosophy. In Tashkent, the Indian Section

of Sovinterprop, which comprised members of the government in exile and some other national revolutionaries, made fairly rapid progress in that sense.

On May 7, 1920, the *Izvestia* of Tashkent carried a note saying that "Sovinterprop ... has set up an Indian Communist organisation which is being reinforced with incoming representatives of Indian tribes". In actual fact, it was still impossible to create a Communist organisation at the time. The author of that note was overhasty, yet it was clear that attempts at creating such an organisation had been made and, consequently, there were some among the Indians who wanted it to be created. We know their names: Mohammad Ali, Abdul Majid and Mohammad Shafiq.

Mohammad Ali said later on that it was while he was still in Afghanistan, that is, probably at the very end of 1919 or early in 1920, that he began to consider himself a Communist.[1] That did not, however, keep him on his arrival in Soviet Russia from totally upholding (in April 1920) the views of national revolutionaries from the Provisional Government of India. Mohammad Shafiq was just as quick in adopting Communist principles, which was noted by M. Shulman back in 1920. He wrote at the time that "Shafiq, a young and inexperienced man, belongs to the middle class... Two months ago he was a sworn enemy of Communism, but now he is a Communist himself." (CPA IML.)

There is an extremely interesting and undoubtedly fair evaluation of the standard of Mohammad Ali's and Mohammad Shafiq's Marxist training and also of their attitude to the problems of revolution in India. It is important to note that this characterisation dates already from late 1921 or early 1922, and that it was given by the plenipotentiary representative of the RSFSR in Afghanistan, Fyodor Raskolnikov, who met them in Kabul where they stopped over on their way to India. "The main fault of both of our young Indian friends," he said, "is their superficially radical and ultra-Communistic approach to the Indian revolutionary movement, without a basic Marxist understanding and an ability to make a serious analysis of class and economic relations." Raskolnikov stressed that "all their knowledge of Marxism comes from popular pamphlets and

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[1] Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and Communist Party of India*," pp. 118-119.

issues of the *Comintern* magazine" and that "their superficial understanding of Communism prompts them to take to 'Leftism' which shows up, for instance, in their desire to boycott the nationalist movement of Congress and Caliphate and in their aspiration for the immediate establishment of a Communist Party in India patterned after the RCP". (CPA IML.)

What claims attention is a great similarity between the assessments M. N. Roy gave of his own transition from nationalism to Socialism and Fyodor Raskolnikov's characterisation of those two young Indian Communists who had made the same kind of transition shortly before that. Naturally, that was not an accidental similarity. In both cases, there were the men who were taking their opening steps in a Communist direction from a starting point that was common to them—petty-bourgeois revolutionary nationalism. Just like Roy, other Indian national revolutionaries passed over to Communism through the gangway of anti-imperialism. Thus national aspirations, provided they are directed against the oppression of small and backward nations and against colonialism, have the support of the Communists opposing the same enemy—international imperialism. And it must be perfectly logical that a considerable and, perhaps, the greater proportion of the early Communists, whether in India or in other Eastern countries, should have emerged from the petty-bourgeois midst of national revolutionaries and revolutionary democrats. Contemporary imperialism, frightened as it is by the development of the Communist movement in the East, is at pains to reduce its popularity. In this connection, many bourgeois historians are trying to prove that it is utterly impossible for a national movement to cooperate with Communists since the former is patriotic while the latter, they claim, is virtually anti-patriotic, because of being subordinated to the international Communist movement, and totally divorced from the mainstream of Oriental public life—the national liberation struggle. Marxism in India and in other Eastern countries has been, in their opinion, artificially implanted by the paid agents of the Comintern and Bolsheviks. For example, Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller described the Indian national revolutionaries in exile, who cooperated with the Comintern and had accepted some principles of Marxism, as "agents of a foreign power" who were less preoccupied with Indian

interests than with the objectives of the international Communist movement, and on that account "cut themselves off completely from the mainstream of Indian politics".[1] However, arguments of this kind are far from the real state of things. The example of Indian national revolutionaries, just as that of the national revolutionaries and revolutionary democrats of China, Turkey and Iran who had adopted Marxism, disproves the alleged hostility between Communism and the national liberation movement. But in accepting the principles of Marxism many revolutionaries often brought with them some elements of deep-rooted religious sentiment and leftovers of petty-bourgeois revolutionary nationalism which they had developed as members of secret national revolutionary organisations. These took years to overcome.

It could not, apparently, have been otherwise because the social and economic environment the Indian and other national revolutionaries had grown up and lived in could not have given them enough material indispensable for a proper perception and quick assimilation of Marxist-Leninist teachings.

The Eastern revolutionaries, advancing to Marxism, found it particularly difficult to overcome their traditional religiousness. And it must have been for that reason that they did overcome it quite often in a very peculiar way—through a religious adaptation of Marxism or a Socialist interpretation of their own creed, mostly, Islam. F. Raskolnikov's above-mentioned characterisation of Mohammad Ali and Mohammad Shafiq stated that they both "stressed hard the absence of all antagonism between Communism and religion". The same idea was expressed more clearly and more definitely by Shaukat Usmani who became a Communist in Soviet Russia. In his letter of June 20, 1922 to M. N. Roy, he wrote: "Islam preaches equality, and so does Communism. That is why I am a Communist." (CPA IML.)

For some national revolutionaries, a Socialist interpretation of Islam must have been what prompted them to gain an insight into the true principles of scientific Communism and subsequently accept them and give up their religious commitment. The evolution of one of the *muhaji-*

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[1] Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India*, p. 533.

rins, Mohammad Iqbal, is a typical one. He was one of those who, evidently, arrived in Tashkent as early as the summer of 1920. On November 25, 1920, he already left for India to do revolutionary work on instructions from the Indian Revolutionary Committee. Once in Kabul (he arrived there on February 1, 1921), Iqbal wrote a letter (dated April 4, 1921) to M. N. Roy to inform him that because of the betrayal by Abdul Haq who was travelling in company with him, he "was denounced as a Communist, that is, an atheist, a non-believer, and everybody thought I was a Communist, although I have never been one. But now I have become a staunch Communist, and you may put my name down as a member of the Indian Communist Party. I am now entirely in agreement with the Communist programme and I shall do my best to propagate it." (CPA IML.) Of course, Iqbal had yet a lot to study and understand so as to make finally sure of the decision he had taken so quickly. But the transition to Marxism from the Socialist interpretation of Islam must have begun.

Naturally, the ideological level of the budding Communists of India was low and it was typical of many of the early Eastern Communists in general. For instance, even a member of the Baku Council for Propaganda and Action, Aga Zade Komram of Iran, arguing to prove that "Communism has some ground in the Iranian people", alluded to the Bahtiars "living under a communal system and having communal troops". In his opinion, besides, the Iranians understood Communism "as a religious teaching pleading for the suffering people to be freed from the avid and selfish Englishmen, landlords and profiteers who have enslaved them".[1]

The Teheran underground Communist organisation, Adalat, had a rule in force early in 1921 whereby anyone "applying for Party membership, shall be on probation from 10 to 20 days and, before full admission, shall swear on the Koran to observe Party discipline".

Mustafa Nafi, who called himself a Communist and a representative of the workers of European Turkey, sent a special report to the Revolutionary Military Council of the Soviet Republic in February 1921 with arguments to prove that the Eastern proletariat had known about the ideas of Communism for over thirteen centuries, that all

[1] *Kommunist*, Baku, December 8, 1920, p. 2.

the Muslim saints, including prophet Mohammed, had been either peasants or workers, and that "the Muslim programme containing the ideas of a social revolution and its Constitution is little different from the present Bolshevik programme". Therefore, he concluded, "the Communist Revolution in the East will show its force very soon".[1]

In all of the examples just cited—one could have produced many more of them—we see attempts of individual pioneer Communists of the East to adjust the ideas of Socialism to the Eastern man's religious consciousness, and to make it easier for him and for themselves to accept them, less painful to overcome their outlook and speed up their conversion to Marxism.

The concept of the ideological community of Islam and Socialism, based on the assumption of egalitarian principles of the Koran, had spread to the Muslim East long before the October Revolution. It was common for that kind of argument to be advanced by national revolutionary and revolutionary democratic Eastern elements who sometimes had not freed themselves from religious zeal, but, having experienced at their own expense the influence of Western Socialistic doctrines, were striving to propagate their ideas among their fellow-countrymen committed to religion to the same or even greater extent.

From November 1917 onwards, the assumption of Socialist principles in the Koran began to spread faster, as a kind of response to the penetration of the ideas of the Great October Revolution into Asia. We have already seen that even some of the early Eastern Communists adhered to this point of view. As to the revolutionaries who remained committed to nationalism, still more of them came to support this argument.

While trying to discover elements of egalitarianism in the Koran and passing them off for truly Socialist principles, they wished to bring religious Muslim masses round to the idea of an alliance with Soviet Russia to gain her support in their struggle against colonial oppression. Besides, they wanted to counter the reactionary propaganda argument that the major feature of Communism was uncompromising atheism and hostile attitude to the faithful.

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[1] SACSA, s. 33988, r. 2, f. 464, pp. 792-793.

This kind of a Socialist interpretation of the Koran was peculiar to many, notably, to Barakatullah and Abdur Rabb Barq whom we already know. Let us note, for instance, two of Barakatullah's typical contentions: 1) In the time of the early prophets of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, all men lived by the laws of Socialism which had been prescribed by these prophets; 2) the Socialist principles of equality and brotherhood, proclaimed by each religion, which have found expression in the formula "Thou shalt wish thy brothers what thou wisheth for thy self", have now been applied in Soviet Russia.[1]

The original programme of the Indian Revolutionary Association, headed by Abdur Rabb, had these two points almost side by side: The Association "shall defend the principles of Communism" and "make nationalistic and religious propaganda". Such ideas spread not only in India. Here are, for example, some excerpts from a typical document written by Abdul Qadir, a member of the Arab Unity Committee, on December 19, 1920, which was turned over to the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the RSFSR, Georgy Chicherin, through the Soviet representative in Ankara, Sh. Z. Eliava. The author of that message offered his own arguments to prove the ideological community of Bolshevism and Islam as well as the expediency and possibility of an alliance between Soviet Russia and the Arabs. The Soviet government, the author presumed, is applying the principles long since enunciated by the Koran.

In the section on "The Islamic Religion and the Bolshevik Programme", Abdul Qadir wrote: "Islam is a direct road to liberty, equality and fraternity because: a) the Islamic religion considers everybody to be equal; b) it eradicates enmity, violence, and despotism; c) it establishes the rights of all humanity..." The author goes on to conclude: "It is from this doctrine that Bolshevism has arisen. For Bolshevism pours out its vials of wrath against those who, under the guise of patronage, enslave the peoples.... Therefore, agreement and alliance between Islam and Bolshevism are close and natural. An alliance between the Bolsheviks and the Arabs will be a powerful and harsh blow against the strong-arm men—the English, the French and Italians." Not content with this line of reasoning, the author adds: "The creeds and the everyday life of the

[1] *Istiraquiun*, Tashkent, April 16, 1919.

Arabs have so much in common with Bolshevism that the struggle of the Arabs in close alliance and in full contact with the Bolsheviks is quite possible and natural."

In the first few years, following the October Revolution, such ideas regarding not only Islam, but Buddhism as well, could be found even in Soviet newspapers published in Muslim areas. In the *Kommunist* of Baku, for example, one Kubad Kasimov sought to prove the imperative need for Soviet aid to Oriental nations and objected to expressions of fear that these peoples would not be able to establish a Socialist scheme of things in their own countries because of their backwardness. "Some forget," he wrote, "that Oriental peoples' customs, manners, habits, and persuasions are ... identical with the ideas of Communism. As a case in point, let us take the dogmas of Buddhism, one of the world ... religions, which proclaims: the Buddhists must treat everybody else without distinction with the same tolerance, condescension and brotherly love". Kasimov followed that up with the statement that the oppressed peoples of the East are waiting for their liberators and are prepared to rise to meet them in order to "realise the ideas of Communism ... which they have long since been professing".[1]

Consequently, the so-called socialist interpretation of Islam which, naturally, had no scientific rationale behind it, attested to the determination of some religious-minded revolutionaries to make it easier for themselves and, especially, for those of the working masses who followed them, to pass over to Marxism and cooperation with Soviet Russia. And in that sense, the given interpretation had a certain positive effect.

One cannot forget, however, that the same interpretation of Islam was exploited by reactionary forces as well. They used it as a means to counter the ideas of scientific socialism which gained currency throughout the East under the impact of the October Revolution. Now the line of reasoning in that case could be something like this: the ideas of socialism were pioneered by Islam, all the Bolsheviks did was to repeat the postulates long since enunciated by the Koran; but, instead of being grateful to the religious source which had inspired them, they rejected religion altogether. Such line of reasoning made it more difficult

[1] *Kommunist*, Baku, June 2, 1920, p. 1.

for the mass of the faithful to draw closer to Soviet Russia, kept up the working people's religious community with exploiters, and prevented the proletariat that was then in the making from passing over to a class-based community, and distracted it from the ideas of scientific Socialism. In our times, the claim of ideological community between Socialism and Islam, deliberately made and artificially argued, is exploited, as the case of Bandyopadhyaya shows, in attempts to prove the insignificance of the impact of the Great October Revolution on India, and on the East in general.

Eastern national revolutionaries had to traverse so winding a road on their way to Marxism and to overcome so many difficulties to get rid of their traditionalist mentality that most of them, even after declaring themselves Communists, did not actually become Communists right away. This detail came to light at the Second Congress of the Communist International where M. N. Roy played a notable part as V. I. Lenin's opponent.

Indian and Other Early Eastern Communists at the Second World Congress of the Communist International

The Second Congress of the Communist International was attended by a fairly large group of Indians or, to be exact, by almost all Indian Communists that existed in the world at the time.

The one to mention, first and foremost, was M. N. Roy who under the assumed name of Robert Allen-Roy was among the delegates with voting powers for he had been delegated by the Mexican Communist Party, already formed, although he was, in effect, representing India. Abani Mukherji and Prativadi Acharya had advisory powers at the Congress.[1] Mohammad Shafiq had an observer's ticket.[2] Now, Acharya and Shafiq had been sent to the Congress by the Council for International Propaganda,[3] although they belonged to different organisations of Indian

[1] See: *The Second Congress of the Communist International*, Verbatim Report, Petrograd, 1921, pp. 661-662 (in Russian).

[2] Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and the Communist Party of India...*, p. 68.

[3] *Izvestia*, Tashkent, July 16, 1920, p. 2.

revolutionaries in Tashkent—the former was one of the leaders of the Indian Revolutionary Association, while the latter was a member of the Indian Section of Sovinterprop.[1] M. N. Roy's wife, Evelyn Trent-Roy was also present at the Congress with advisory powers, on behalf of the Mexican Communist Party.[2]

Among the delegates to the Congress there were representatives of the Communists of other Eastern countries—Turkey, Iran, Korea and China—where the Communist movement had begun earlier than it did among the Indians. V. I. Lenin made a point of noting that alongside the Communists from Western countries, "Communist parties and groups in the East, in the colonial and backward countries ... were likewise represented at the Congress" and that the revolutionary movement in advanced countries would, in fact, have been sheer fraud without the full and closest possible association with the liberation struggle of colonial nations.[3]

The Second Congress of the Comintern was, in point of fact, the first really international forum of Communists in the many years of the world Socialist movement for it was widely representative of the Communist movement not only of the West but of the East as well. Besides, the composition of the Congress was perfectly matched by its deliberations. The very fact that the whole of the Eastern subject the Congress dealt with was considered under Lenin's direction was a pointer to the Comintern's extremely serious attitude to the problem of a Communist party in an oppressed country. The Congress reviewed a wide range of problems of the East: the social and economic

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[1] With the disarray on railway transport in those days, Shafiq and Acharya could well have been late for the Congress which was due to open on July 19, because they had left Tashkent not earlier than July 4 and, most probably, much later, though not later than July 12. This follows from a report of July 3 (*Izvestia* of Tashkent, July 4, 1920) about the arrival of a large group of the Indian Revolutionary Association members in Tashkent on July 2, and from a report of July 12 about the departure of Acharya and Shafiq for Moscow (the date was not specified either) for the Second Congress of the Comintern (*Izvestia*, Tashkent, July 16, 1920). This late departure, if that was really the case, may account for the fact that M. N. Roy said nothing in his memoirs about Acharya's and Shafiq's presence at the Congress.

[2] *Second Congress of the Communist International*, p. 662.

[3] See: V. I. Lenin, "The Second Congress of the Communist International," *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 271.

standards of colonial society, the character of the revolutions expected to occur in Eastern countries, the role which the national bourgeoisie and other classes, particularly the peasantry, could play in those revolutions, the attitude of Communists to the national revolutionary movement, the special tasks before the Communist parties of Eastern countries, to mention just a few. The decisions of the Congress were based on V. I. Lenin's works about the Communist and national liberation movement which he had produced during World War I and after the October Revolution.

The resolution of the Congress on the national and colonial questions had been drafted by V. I. Lenin by as early as June 5, 1920, as "Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions".[1] This document was published in the middle of June.[2] In June and July, it was thoroughly discussed, at Lenin's request, by Communists familiar with the problems of the East.

It must have been at that very time that M. N. Roy, who was then in Moscow, where he had arrived as early as May 1920,[3] received a copy of the "preliminary Draft Theses" with V. I. Lenin's own inscription "Com. Roy, for criticism and suggestions".[4] After that, Roy was received by Lenin several times to discuss a wide range of problems of the national and social liberation of Eastern countries.

In his conversations with Lenin, Roy set forth his system of peremptory left-sectarian views on these problems. Those views had nothing new about them since quite a few of the early Communists from other Oriental countries also held leftist revolutionary positions. The only thing M. N. Roy did by contrast was to express them more clearly and uphold them more forcefully and, as stated earlier on, to streamline all leftist sectarian arguments as an integrated system.

Eye-witnesses said that V. I. Lenin spent hours conversing with Roy to explain to him that his "left" views were unscientific and harmful.[5] In so doing, as Roy himself

[1] See: V. I. Lenin, "Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, pp. 144-151.

[2] See: *The Communist International*, No. 11, 1920, pp. 1719-1724.

[3] *M. N. Roy's Memoirs*, p. 304.

[4] Ibid., p. 340.

[5] *The Fourth Conference of the RCP Central Committee with Executives from National Republics and Regions in Moscow, June 9-12, 1923*, Verbatim Report, Moscow, 1923, p. 191 (in Russian).

wrote subsequently, Lenin's attitude was very kind, tolerant and totally unbiased.[1]

One of the major points of Lenin's Theses called on the Communists to support the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement in the Eastern countries. In making this point, Lenin proceeded from the assumption that it was feudal or patriarchally-tribal type of relationship that predominated in the colonial and dependent countries of Asia. Feudal landlords and tribal chiefs served, as a rule, to prop up foreign imperialist domination whereas the rising national bourgeoisie acted against imperialism.

Lenin reckoned with the real situation where the sweeping liberation movement, led by the national bourgeoisie, was the most important factor of public life in Eastern countries, particularly in India, after World War I and the October Revolution in Russia. All other action, including class-inspired action by the peasantry and the early contingents of the proletariat were, in effect, part of the national liberation movement.

During a long period of struggle for the creation of independent nation-states, the Communist parties of backward countries, while preserving and safeguarding their ideological and organisational independence, ought to support the liberation movement and cooperate with the anti-imperialist bourgeoisie, pushing it into more resolute action against the forces of foreign imperialism and local feudalism.

What was particularly important was that the peasantry, making up as it did the overwhelming mass of the population in the backward countries, was the major force and mainstay of the national movement.[2] That is to say that Lenin's insistence on support for the national liberation struggle in the East meant, first and foremost, backing up the peasant movement and establishing a close alliance with it.[3] This course is known to have been expressed in a condensed way in the slogans calling for the establishment of a united front of all anti-imperialist forces and the right of subject nations to self-determination.

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[1] *M. N. Roy's Memoirs*, pp. 380, 381.

[2] See: V. I. Lenin, "Report to the Commission on the National and the Colonial Questions, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 241.

[3] See: Ibid., pp. 241-242 and also the "Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions", Vol. 31, pp. 148-150.

There is a variety of reliable sources by which to judge Roy's views on those problems at the time. One is a relatively detailed newspaper report which was written, in all probability, by Mikhail Pavlovich, about the discussion held on July 25 in the Congress National and Colonial Commission;[1] second, M. N. Roy's article which appeared in the *Communist International* journal, which went to press on July 20, 1920;[2] third, the *Manifesto of the Revolutionary Party of India*[3] also written by Roy; and, fourth, the *Indian Communist Manifesto*, published in Berlin and signed by M. N. Roy, Abani Mukherji, and Santi Devi (Evelyn Roy)[4] before all of them left for Moscow; and some other items. Naturally, both the manifestoes and the articles had been brought off by Roy before the Second Congress and reflected their author's standpoint as it really was. Roy's "Supplementary Theses", adopted by the Congress as a second resolution, are of great importance. M. N. Roy's memoirs, written many years later, are of certain interest as well.

M. N. Roy refused to accept Lenin's argument that the Communists must support the liberation struggle and the national bourgeoisie which led that struggle. "I disagreed with his view," M. N. Roy wrote, "that the nationalist bourgeoisie played a historically revolutionary role and therefore should be supported by the Communists."[5] Roy argued that India was a capitalist country already and that "with her being subjected ... to the power of imperialist British capital, 80 per cent of her entire population turned proletarian".[6] Speaking at a meeting of the National and Colonial Commission of the Second Congress of the Comintern, M. N. Roy changed that formula to make

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[1] Cf. The Report of the deliberations of the Eastern Commission of the Second Congress, signed "M. Pavlova" (*Bulletin of the Second Congress of the Communist International*, No. 1, July 27, 1920, pp. 1-2) with the text of Mikhail Pavlovich's newspaper article on "Colonial and National Policies at the Second Congress of the Communist International" (*Zhizn natsionalnostei*, August 10 1920, p. 2).

[2] See: M. N. Roy, "The Revolutionary Movement in India", *The Communist International*, No. 12, 1920, pp. 2169-2172.

[3] *Zhizn natsionalnostei*, July 25, 1920, p. 2.

[4] See: *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol. I, pp. 151-155.

[5] *M. N. Roy's Memoirs*, p. 355.

[6] *The Communist International*, No. 12, 1920, p. 2169.

it more acceptable "Since that time," he declared, "English capitalism entrenched itself in India, 80 per cent of the country's population living by agricultural work have lost their property and turned into labourers", that is, they became agricultural proletarians. He estimated the country's proletariat at 5 million,[1] which was quite an exaggeration, too. The Programme of the Indian Revolutionary Committee in Tashkent, worked out by Roy, again argued in November 1920, that, as a matter of fact, 90 per cent of the Indian population belonged to the working class.[2]

The early Eastern Communists, and M. N. Roy in particular, knew, of course, about the role of the proletariat in the process of mankind's liberation from the shackles of exploitation and oppression. They often used the word "proletariat" and the concept of "dictatorship of the proletariat". Yet the actual meaning of these terms of Marxist science escaped many of them. While admitting the absence or extreme weakness of the proletariat in their countries, some of them pointed to compensating factors which, they claimed, were so potent as to allow the East to approach Communism faster than the West. To bear out this argument, they would refer to the left-overs of the communal and clan system in Asia, to the poverty and pauperism of its labouring population and to the prevalence of Buddhism and Islam seemingly congenial to the ideals of Communism due to what was claimed to be their inherent egalitarianism.

Some Eastern Communists, including M. N. Roy, would not concede that the proletariat in Asian countries was either very weak or just non-existent. On the contrary, they spoke of it being numerous and, in any case, politically very active. They said so either because they failed to understand the social and class content of the concept of "proletariat" or just because they wanted to find any excuse whatsoever to justify their leftism. They argued, therefore, that it was the poorest, most oppressed and dispossessed section of the population that was the proletariat. With such standards to go by, the proletarian class

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[1] See: *Bulletin of the Second Congress of the Communist International* (*Pravda* Supplement), No. I, July 27, 1920, pp. 1-2 (in Russian).

[2] ORCSA, s. 5402, r. I, f. 486, p. 3.

was claimed to include millions of ruined artisans, handicraftsmen, peasants and lumpens' (pauper labourers—people with profoundly petty-bourgeois mentality fundamentally different from the working class in its Marxist acceptation). To take Roy's percentage of workers in India seriously, the proletariat as a class would have to be understood to comprise all the working population of that country, though its overwhelming majority consisted of peasants. An Lunhe, Chairman of the Central Organising Bureau of Chinese Communists under the auspices of the RCP(B) Central Committee, had sent a noteworthy document to the Second Congress of the Commintern with some evidence to prove that there were three "actively revolutionary forces" in China—bandits, emigrants [evidently, seasonal Chinese workers in foreign lands to earn a living.—*M. P.*] and farm labourers. It is all of them together that, in his opinion, constituted the Chinese proletariat.

An unidentified member of the Council for International Propaganda in the East wrote about the prospect ahead for a socialist revolution in Asia: "It goes without saying that the East is more enslaved and more humiliated, its shackles are heavier than those of the Western proletariat, and it must be clear, it seems, that the dictatorship of the proletariat can be installed in the East sooner than in the West." So, in the opinion of many of the "left", the oppressed peasantry and the urban poor were equivalent to the proletariat, and the ruin and pauperisation of these groups served as a sure guarantee of their commitment to socialist revolution.

Contrary to facts, M. N. Roy claimed that the struggle of the Indian people had essentially no national substance, but was "fast assuming the character of a struggle for economic and social liberation and for the abolition of all class domination".

As to the national liberation movement which pressed for nothing but "political independence", it, in Roy's opinion, "has no sympathy of the overwhelming majority of the population of India".[1] He even claimed that "the masses are not allowing themselves to be carried away by the idea of overthrowing the British rule, which is an unknown value to them".[2]

[1] *Zhizn natsionalnostei*, July 25, 1920, p. 2.
[2] *The Communist International*, No. 12, 1920, p. 2169.

While denying that the national bourgeoisie was even the least revolutionary in its anti-imperialist stand, Roy went on to gainsay the justice of the slogan about "the right of nations to self-determination". He wrote: "By demanding 'self-determination' for India, our bureaucratic leaders [meaning the leaders of the Indian national liberation movement—*M. P.*] are reinforcing the idea of bourgeois nationalism whose programme spells no liberation for the masses".[1] Roy regarded the creation of national states or the enforcement of the principle of self-determination of nations as "empty measures of imperialists in disguise" since all that could do was to hold the mass of the working people tight under the control of their new master—the national bourgeoisie.

It is indicative that shortly before that, it was this anti-imperialist principle of self-determination of nations that had prompted Roy, a national revolutionary, to join the Communist movement, but now that very Roy rejected it altogether. Naturally, M. N. Roy's negative attitude to "the right of nations to self-determination" did not mean that he was opposed to India or other oppressed Eastern countries achieving their national independence. Neither did he deny the need to give top priority to other bourgeois-democratic objectives in India, but presumed, that only a Socialist revolution could mean national independence for India along with social liberation of her working people.

M. N. Roy considered that India already had all the conditions essential for that to be achieved. Ignoring the country's specific historical background, he sought to prove that it was a proletarian socialist revolution, rather than a bourgeois-democratic one, as Lenin considered, that was on the agenda in India. Roy wrote: "British imperialism, which combines the interests of the dominant classes, must be broken but all domination by classes must disappear along with British domination".[2] In describing the immediate, rather than future, tasks before the Indian Communists, Roy pointed out: "Our programme calls for the Indian proletariat and the landless peasantry to be organised in line with the principle of the class struggle for the sake of abolition of political, economic and social exploitation, and the proclamation of Communism and the dictatorship

[1] *Zhizn natsionalnostei*, July 25, 1920, p. 2.
[2] *The Communist International*, No. 12, 1920, p. 2169.

of the proletariat".[1] In a journal article, Roy summed up: "A proletarian revolution is the only way leading to the cherished goal".[2] That was also the position of the then leader of Iranian Communists, Sultan Zadeh. Shortly before the Second Congress of the Comintern, he wrote: "Persia is one of the Oriental countries to have an extremely steeled working class", and therefore, "Persia must be and will be the first nation of the Orient to hoist the red banner of social revolution upon the ruins of the Shah's throne".[3] Speaking of social revolution, he meant socialist revolution. This idea was expressed by another leader of Iranian Communists in Turkestan, Alikhanov. He said (in April 1920): Persia "has a large number of proletarian workers with a relatively high degree of class consciousness", and that "creates favourable conditions for a Communist revolution in Persia".[4] Just before the Second Congress of the Comintern, Sultan Zadeh turned over to V. I. Lenin the theses he had prepared about the outlook for a social revolution in Iran, on which he based his speeches at the Congress itself. Lenin studied Sultan Zadeh's theses (or report, as they came to be called), and drew such conclusions from them as basically rejected the author's theories.

Sultan Zadeh declared at the Second Congress: "Social Revolution in India and Persia is having a broad and solid base in the shape of the proletariat and a semi-proletariat formed by English commercial capital there".[5]

By contrast, V. I. Lenin pointed out that a large part of the population of Iran were *peasants under medieval exploitation* and nothing but "small artisans", not a proletariat, in that country's industry.[6]

Sultan Zadeh argued that Iran was a bourgeois country and that to support a national liberation or bourgeois-

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[1] *Zhizn natsionalnostei*, July 25, 1920 p. 2.

[2] *The Communist International*, No. 12, 1920, p. 2171.

[3] See: *The Second Congress of the Communist International*. Proceedings, Publishing Office of the Communist International, Moscow, 1920, pp. 129-131.

[4] ORCSA, s. 5402, r. I, f. 502, p. 6.

[5] *Bulletin of the Second Congress of the Communist International*, July 29, 1920, No. 2, p. 1 (in Russian).

[6] See: V. I. Lenin, "Remarks on the Report of A. Sultan Zade Concerning the Prospects of a Social Revolution in the East", *Collected Works*, Vol. 42, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1969, p. 202.

democratic movement there "would mean leading the masses to counter-revolution".[1] In Lenin's opinion, however, Iran was merely one of "the *peasant* countries of the colonial East" and, therefore, the tasks before the Communists over there were quite different from those before Western Communists.[2] Sultan Zadeh believed that what should be done in countries like Iran was to carry out a socialist revolution and, therefore, it was necessary "to create and support a Communist movement to *counter-balance bourgeois-democratic trends*" [my italics—*M. P.*].[3]

By contrast, Lenin stressed the immense difficulties that had to be faced in creating Communist parties under those conditions in the Orient and called for "*thinking about and seeking concrete* answers" to the difficult question of how to "adjust" the Communist party to the level of those countries for which the achievement of national independence was the task of top priority at the time.[4]

The leader of the first Turkish Communists, Mustafa Subhi expounded the same views about Turkey as Sultan Zadeh did about Iran. As early as July 1918, speaking to the Moscow Conference of Turkish Socialists, he called for the immediate nationalisation of all means of production in Turkey and for the liberation from bourgeois tyranny.[5] In July 1920, in an article in the Communist newspaper, *Yeni-Dünya* he declared: "no ... power, even if called a Republic, in Anatolia and in Turkey will have any ground to stand on and will not exist". He urged action to establish the "power of workers, peasants and *askers* (soldiers)".[6]

Naturally, the basic element of such a platform was an emphatic denial of any revolutionary potential of the national bourgeoisie and a flat refusal to establish any cooperation with it within the framework of a united front of all anti-imperialist forces. At the Moscow Conference of Turkish Socialists, Mustafa Subhi proclaimed that the fu-

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[1] See: *The Second Congress of the Communist International*, Proceedings... p. 131.

[2] See: V. I. Lenin, "Remarks on the Report of A. Sultan Zadeh...", *Collected Works*, Vol. 42, p. 202.

[3] See: *The Second Congress of the Communist International*, p. 120.

[4] See: V. I. Lenin, "Report to the Commission on the National and the Colonial Questions", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, pp. 241-242, and also "Remarks on the Report of A. Sultan Zadeh", Vol. 42, p. 202.

[5] CPA IML, s. 17, r. 4, f. 109, p. 13.

[6] *Kommunist*, Baku, July 7, 1920.

ture Socialist Party of Turkey "must break with national capital and enter into no agreements with it".[1]

As the leader of Korean Socialists, Pak Din Shun wrote, the Constituent Congress of the Korean Socialist Party (Vladivostok, April 1919) declared that the objectives of the struggle against Japanese imperialism did not mean at all that the efforts of the working people had to be united with those of the national bourgeoisie, although it did lead the liberation movement in the country. The party of Korean Socialists "decided not to fall for the hypocritical and spurious assurances of bourgeois politicians as the working people will suffer just as much under the yoke of the Korean bourgeoisie as they are now suffering from the arbitrary rule of the vultures of Japanese imperialism". Since the latest Congress, Pak Din Shun wrote further on, "the Korean Socialist Party has definitely broken with the national bourgeoisie and nobility, and embarked on the platform of a class struggle and proclaimed the slogan of a 'Free Korean Republic'".[2]

The leftist outlook of the first Communists of the East was so strong as to persist even after the Second Congress of the Comintern which called, in fact, for the establishment of a united front of all anti-imperialist forces of Asia. In December 1920, Sultan Zadeh wrote, for instance: "The illusion about the bourgeoisie in backward countries being still able to act on behalf of national-democratic revolution must be dropped once and for all."[3] Considering so wide a currency of leftist revolutionary views among the early Eastern Communists and even among individual Soviet political workers, V. I. Lenin found it reasonable to give them an opportunity of consistently stating their case at the Congress.

As M. N. Roy said later on, Lenin invited him to outline theses on the national and colonial questions. Moreover, Roy emphasised, Lenin had spoken about an alternative set of theses to his "Preliminary Draft", while Roy insisted that the theses had but to complement Lenin's docu-

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[1] CPA IML, s. 17, r. 4, f. 109, p. 13.

[2] Djishun Pak (Pak Din Shun), "The Socialist Movement in Korea", *The Communist International*, 1919, No. 7-8, p. 1174 (in Russian).

[3] A. Sultan Zadeh, "The Development of the Communist Movement and Tactics of Imperialist Bourgeoisie in the East". *Zhizn natsionalnostei*, December 24, 1920.

ment.[1] Roy formulated the notes and called them "Supplementary Theses on the National and Colonial Questions" although, in substance, they were certainly an alternative.[2]

During a meeting of the Congress Commission, there was a hectic debate over Lenin's "Preliminary Draft" and Roy's "Supplementary Theses". M. N. Roy spoke up to defend the original version of his theses. Lenin thouroughly criticised his opponent's "left" positions and was readily supported by the Commission. The end result was to delete glaring leftist points from Roy's document, which unequivocally denied the value of national liberation movements and the need for Communists to support them, and groundlessly overrated the level of the class struggle of the proletariat and peasantry in the East as well as the East's role in bringing about a victorious proletarian revolution in the West, contending that socialist revolution in the colonies was an indispensable precondition for the abolition of capitalism in metropolitan countries, and seeking to prove that a bourgeois-democratic stage in the revolutionary struggle in the Orient was unneccessary.

Lenin and the Congress Commission introduced essential amendments and corrections into Roy's Theses. For instance, instead of outright rejection of the possibility of proletarian revolutions in the countries of Europe without the prior overthrow of imperialist domination of colonies, the Fourth Thesis was reworded to express an entirely different idea. It said that for the final success of the world revolution to be "two forces must be coordinated"—a proletarian revolution in metropolitan countries and the anti-imperialist movement in colonies.[3] So the idea now was to create a militant anti-imperialist alliance of the revolutionary proletariat and the national liberation movement.

Originally, the "Supplementary Theses" maintained that only a socialist revolution the East was well prepared for already would be effective in overthrowing foreign domination along with native capitalism. The Tenth Thesis, completely deleted by Lenin, said that the Communists should not support the bourgeois-democratic movements in the colonies because such support would conduce to "foster-

[1] *M. N. Roy's Memoirs*, p. 380.

[2] See: A. B. Reznikov, "V. I. Lenin on the National Liberation Movement", *Kommunist*, No. 7, 1967, pp. 91-102 (in Russian).

[3] M. N. Roy, "Supplementary Theses on the National and Colonial Questions", ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 489, pp. 4-8.

ing a national spirit which would, of course, hinder the awakening of the class consciousness of the masses". Another way was suggested—that of "encouraging and supporting revolutionary mass action through a Communist Party of the proletarians" which was to induce the "real revolutionary forces to action that would overthrow not only foreign imperialism but forestall the growth of local capitalism".[1] That is to say, Roy's adventurist and sectarian precept, implying an immediate socialist revolution, did not consider the possibility of a non-capitalist development of the countries that had achieved nothing beyond their national independence, although that particular issue had been discussed more than once among the early Communists of the East and Soviet political workers connected with them. So, in 1918, K. M. Troyanovsky, while drawing up a programme for the League of Liberation of the East, tried to outline the ways and means of preventing a capitalist development of the countries that would succeed in getting rid of colonialism.[2] Pak Din Shun wrote in his article "The Revolutionary East and the Immediate Task before the Communist International", in June 1920, about the problem of non-capitalist development of economically backward countries, as it had been formulated by Marx, and proposed its solution in the context of Korea.[3] However, both Troyanovsky and Pak Din Shun generally concurred in the view that the only factor that could bring about a non-capitalist development of Eastern countries was a socialist revolution that a victorious Western proletariat would help Eastern workers and peasants to carry out.[4]

Lenin was alone to pose and articulate the problem of non-capitalist way of development in the course of the discussion in the National and Colonial Commission of the Second Congress, proceeding from the actual prospect for a victorious conclusion of the national liberation movements

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[1] A. B. Reznikov, *V. I. Lenin on the National Liberation Movement*, p. 93 (in Russian).

[2] See: K. Troyanovsky, *The East and Revolution*, Moscow, 1918, pp. 67-68 (in Russian).

[3] See: *The Communist International*, No. 12, 1920, pp. 2158-2160, 2162 (in Russian).

[4] M. A. Persits, "Eastern Internationalists in Russia and Some Questions of the National Liberation Movement", *The Comintern and the East*, pp. 131-133.

and the impossibility of a socialist revolution in Eastern countries at that time.

The corrected version of Roy's Theses stated twice (Seventh and Ninth theses) that "the Revolution in the colonies is not going to be a communist revolution in its first stages". Proceeding from that assumption, the Seventh Thesis said that "the cooperation of the bourgeois nationalist revolutionary elements is useful" for the overthrow of foreign capitalism.

The final version of the "Supplementary Theses" proclaimed (Seventh Thesis) Lenin's idea that the primary and indispensable task before the Communists of Eastern countries was "to organise the peasants and workers and lead them to the revolution and to the establishment of Soviet Republics."[1] What was implied, of course, was not a republic of proletarian dictatorship, but the establishment of a people's democratic state that, with the victorious proletariat of advanced nations in the lead, could take the masses on their way to socialism, skipping capitalism.

"Thus," the document says, "the masses in the backward countries may reach Communism, not through capitalistic development, but led by the class-conscious proletariat of the advanced capitalist countries."[2]

The changes made in the "Supplementary Theses" were considerable. So Roy distorted the truth altogether by asserting in his *Memoirs* that Lenin had accepted his draft theses with just a few verbal alterations and that it was approved by the Congress as it then stood.[3] In actual reality, as we have seen, Lenin and the Commission essentially deleted a system of avowedly leftist views from them. That was what permitted Lenin to tell the Congress that both resolutions proceeded from a number of common guidelines and that "we have thus reached complete unanimity on all major issues".[4]

On July 25, the Eastern Commission, following intense daylong deliberations, endorsed Lenin's "Preliminary Draft..." with insignificant changes and Roy's "Supplementary Theses" with some corrections of principle. On July

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[1] ORCSA, s. 5402, r. I, f. 489, pp. 4-8.

[2] Ibid.

[3] *M. N. Roy's Memoirs*, p. 381.

[4] V. I. Lenin, "The Report to the Commission on the National and the Colonial Questions, July 26," *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 240.

28, a plenary session of the Second Congress decided, just as the Commission recommended, to pass the two said resolutions on the national and colonial question under discussion.

Some believe that there is no essential difference between the original resolution and the "Supplementary Theses". The common argument produced in an effort to prove this point is that of David Wijnkoop of the Communist Party of the Netherlands, who stated that "the theses had been made to square with one another completely in the process of discussion" and also the opening part of a statement by the Secretary of the Eastern Commission of the Second Congress, Maring, who stated that he found "no distinction between the theses of Comrade Roy and those of Comrade Lenin. They are alike in essence".[1]

But that prompts some queries. If the two documents were alike in essence, why did they have to be adopted separately? Wasn't one enough? Or wasn't it possible to unite the "Preliminary Draft..." and the "Supplementary Theses" within a single resolution?

Perhaps, one should presume that the political course outlined in the "Supplementary Theses" was somewhat different from that of the first resolution of the Congress drafted by Lenin. What seems to militate against such a supposition is Lenin's above-mentioned statement of July 26 to the effect that the commission "reached complete unanimity "on all major issues". But, while noting the Commission's unanimity "on all major issues", Lenin did not claim that there was no difference at all, let alone essential, between the first and second Theses. One may even surmise that Lenin proceeded from the assumption that there was such a difference and that it could not have been otherwise. For it was, evidently, not for nothing that he should have expressly pointed out that the "Supplementary Theses" had been "framed chiefly from the standpoint of the situation in India and other big Asian countries oppressed by Britain".[2]

It is also important to draw attention to the second part of Maring's statement which followed his argument that there was no distinction between the two documents. "The

[1] *The Second Congress of the Communist International, Proceedings...*, Publishing Office of Communist International, Moscow, 1920, p. 145.

[2] V. I. Lenin, "The Report to the Commission on the National and the Colonial Questions, July 26", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 241.

difficulty," Maring said, "lies only in finding the precise formula for the relationship between the revolutionary nationalistic and Socialist movements in the backward countries and colonies. This difficulty does not exist in reality. In actual practice we find it necessary to work together with the revolutionary nationalist elements..."[1]

So where was, then, that difficulty or lack of clarity regarding the major issue of the revolutionary work of Communists in the East? There is no such difficulty, nor any lack of clarity in Lenin's resolution of the Congress. It considered the conditions for the cooperation of Communists with national revolutionary forces in various aspects at least in four places, and proclaimed four times that "*there must be direct aid* from all Communist Parties to the revolutionary movements in dependent or unequal nations ... and in colonies", that "All Communist Parties *must give active support* to the revolutionary movements of liberation," that "*it is the duty* of the Communist International *to support* the revolutionary movement" and that the Comintern "must *establish temporary relations and even unions with the bourgeois democracy of colonies and backward countries*". [Italics added—*M. P.*][2] Perhaps, there was still some lack of clarity in the "Supplementary Theses"?

A careful examination of the document will show that this is not a baseless presumption. Although the system of leftist revolutionary and voluntaristic views had been essentially deleted from the "Supplementary Theses", they still retained some points which reflected some of Roy's "left" ideas, if not so clearly and not so definitely as in the original version. It must have been this circumstance that permitted Roy to declare at the Congress on July 26 that he had accepted only "some of the corrections" of the Commission to his Theses.

However, this peculiarity of Roy's "Theses" had been noticed quite a long time ago. So, Ye. S. Varga, delegate to the Second Congress of the Comintern, in 1964 described the "Supplementary Theses" as "more radical" in his opinion, "accepted... because the major object of the debate and the resolution was to convince the representatives of the Communist Parties of imperialist countries ... that they must support the anti-imperialist movement in the colo-

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[1] *The Second Congress of the Communist International*, p. 145.
[2] Ibid., p. 574.

nies".[1] even though those movements were led by the national bourgeoisie.[2] S. G. Sardesai, a member of the Central Secretariat of the National Council of the Communist Party of India, in 1967 pointed out the unscientific and voluntaristic character of some of the points of the "Supplementary Theses". He wrote that Lenin "had an amazingly correct grasp of the realities of the colonial liberation movement, ... while Roy, with his professed intimate knowledge of the subject, lived in a world of phantasy, the romantic creation of his own mind".[3]

As stated earlier on, Roy proceeded in his theorising from the assumption that India, China, Indonesia and even Egypt were capitalist countries, if backward. He sought to justify that argument in his pre-Congress articles and found it necessary to repeat it at the plenary session of the Congress on July 26, already after his Theses had been modified by Lenin and by the Commission. During the War and immediately after it "great changes have taken place in India," Roy said. "While formerly English capitalism had always hindered the development of Indian industry, of late it has changed that policy. The growth of industry in British India has gone on at such a pace as can hardly be imagined here in Europe. Taking into consideration that during recent times the industrial proletariat of British India has increased by 15 per cent, and that the capital investment in British Indian industry has risen 200 per cent one gets an idea of the rapid development of the capitalist system in British India. The same applies to Egypt, the Dutch Indies, and China."[4]

However, Roy's contention about the predominant capitalist system in India did not correspond to the actual state

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[1] Ye. S. Varga, *Essays on the Problems of the Political Economy of Capitalism*, Politizdat, Moscow, 1964, p. 91 (in Russian).

[2] For instance, the Italian delegate, Serrati, maintained that national movements with bourgeois participation, not to speak of bourgeois leadership, were not revolutionary, and to support them could "only demoralise the class consciousness of the proletariat..." See: *The Second Congress of the Communist International, Proceedings...* Publishing Office of the Communist International, Moscow, 1920, p. 154.

[3] S. G. Sardesai, *India and the Revolution in Russia*, Moscow, 1967, p. 81 (Russ. ed.).

[4] *The Second Congress of the Communist International, Proceedings* ..., Publishing Office of the Communist International, Moscow, 1920, p. 118.

of things any more than his argument that British imperialism had contributed to Indian industrial growth in post-war years. This argument, incidentally, betrayed Roy's incipient advance towards the theory of decolonisation as it came to be known later on. The real state of things was that India remained an agrarian and peasant country with a colonial and feudal system dominating the countryside. Over 80 per cent of her population lived in the countryside. There were deep-rooted feudal left-overs in Indian villages, kept up by British imperialism in every way, in spite of the emergence and growth of capitalist elements.

As to India's industrial development, although it was at a higher level than in other colonial countries, and had surged up especially during the years of the World War I, the proportion of factory-based production in the national economy still was as low as 10 to 15 per cent. By a variety of means, English imperialism was holding up the independent industrial development of India and was at pains to impede the growth of her heavy industry. Some major sectors of industrial production were in the hands of British capital, and national industry depended on it completely. The national bourgeoisie, economically dependent and barred from political power, had sharp differences with British imperialism and headed the national liberation movement in the country.

As a result of the work done by the Congress Commission and by Lenin, Roy's document no longer contained any direct reference to the dominance of a capitalist system in India or similar countries.[1] Nevertheless, the Theses largely proceeded from this particular contention, although one of them declared that backward countries [apparently, excluding India which Roy considered to be a capitalist

[1] There must have been such a reference earlier on, for it would have been difficult to explain otherwise why the text of the "Supplementary Theses", published in the verbatim report of the Congress in 1921, had the First Thesis open as follows: "To determine more especially the relation of the Communist International to the revolutionary movements in the countries dominated by capitalistic imperialism, for instance, China and India, is one of the most important questions before the Second Congress of the Third International." (See: *The Second Congress of the Communist International*). The reference to the dominance of capitalist order in Eastern countries, like India and China, faithfully reflects Roy's judgement which he restated in no uncertain terms in the Theses submitted to the Third Congress of the Comintern a year later (See: *Narody Dalnego Vostoka*, Irkutsk, No. 3, 1921, pp. 337-342).

country closer to Europe than to Asia—*M. P.*] could achieve communism, bypassing the capitalist phase.

The Seventh Thesis said, for instance, that in the dependent countries of the East and, consequently, in India above all, "there are to be found... two distinct movements which every day grow farther apart from each other. One is the bourgeois-democratic nationalist movement with a programme of political independence *under the bourgeois order*, and the other is the mass action of the poor and ignorant peasants and workers *for their liberation from all sorts of exploitation*. The former endeavours to control the latter, and often succeeds to a certain extent".[1] [Italics added—*M. P.*]. Sardesai, criticising this contention, writes: "Where, in India of 1920, ... were there two such 'distinct' movements...? They may have existed in Roy's dreams, but dream is not reality."[2] As much was said by G. Adhikari who criticised Roy for separating a united movement into two opposing parts, "contraposing the spontaneously developing workers' and peasants' economic struggles to the general national liberation movement".[3] As already stated, there was an all-embracing national liberation movement gaining ground in India, with sporadic action by workers and peasants as one of its elements. Yet it was quite obvious that neither the workers, still less the peasants, were fighting to liberate themselves from all exploitation. They did not do so for the simple reason that there was no Communist Party in India in those days which alone could have set them such a task under certain circumstances. Now, all the workers and peasants wanted to achieve through their action was an improvement of their economic condition within the framework of the existing system of exploitation. That struggle fit in perfectly with the national liberation movement as it was directed most often either against foreign colonialists or against their agents. Even the strikes of workers at the enterprises of the national bourgeoisie had anti-imperialist overtones in the long run as they compelled the local bourgeoisie to take an active part in the national liberation movement.

Lenin made some essential deletions in Roy's Seventh

[1] ORCSA, s. 5402, r. I, f. 489, pp. 4-8.

[2] S. G. Sardesai, *Op. cit.*, p. 52.

[3] G. Adhikari, "Lenin on Roy's Supplementary Colonial Theses", *Marxist Miscellany*, A Collection of Essays, (January 1970), People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1970, p. 3.

Thesis, which went far towards moderating its original "left" tone. He crossed out his contention that the bourgeois-democratic national movement enjoyed no support of the masses and that there was a mass mistrust of bourgeois political leaders.[1] At the points of deletions made by Lenin in another, composite copy of the "Supplementary Theses", the Secretary of the Commission of the Second Congress, Henrik Maring made hand-written inserts about the existence of a bourgeois order in India and about Indian workers being already in battle for their full social liberation. The inserts did not make at all for the leftist propositions they replaced, but, nevertheless, somewhat intensified the "leftism" of the phrase Lenin left to stand. (In the quotation from the Seventh Thesis (on p.142), the words added by Maring are italicized).

There seems to be no reason to believe the inserts were written by Maring on a special "instruction from, and with the participation of V. I. Lenin",[2] since the "Supplementary Theses" had been adopted, wholly and entirely, "on an instruction from, and with the participation of V. I. Lenin", if one could put it that way. Should Lenin, while editing the "Supplementary Theses", have chosen to write a few new words or phrases, he would have done that without anybody's assistance. It is far more likely that, once thoroughly corrected by Lenin, the Theses were naturally referred to the Secretary of the Commission to take down all the corrections accepted. The Secretary apparently found it possible to make certain concessions to the author of the "Supplementary Theses" (all the more so since that was Lenin's approach) and accept the inserts which had probably been suggested by Roy himself. In any case, the inserted words were most consistent with Roy's ideas about the high level of the social movement of Indian workers and peasants and about a bourgeois order of society already prevailing in India at the time.

The "left" Indian Communists' nihilistic attitude to the national movement in their own country ought, it would seem, to have made them totally immune to nationalism. Yet, it was just the other way round in actual fact. Nationalism clothed in ultra-revolutionary trappings was still one

[1] See: A. B. Reznikov, "V. I. Lenin on the Problems of the National Liberation and Communist Movement in the East", *Narody Asii i Afriki*, No. 6, 1974, pp. 51-52.

[2] Ibid.

of the essential elements of their outlook. Rostislav Ulyanovsky, having discovered that contradiction, pointed out with good reason in 1967 that "for the 'left', who sometimes called themselves Communists, to have denied the revolutionary significance of the democratic national liberation movements squared, as a rule, with their narrow-minded nationalism".[1]

In the Congress Commission Roy said that "the destiny of the revolutionary movement in Europe turns entirely on the progress of the revolution in the Orient. Without a triumph of the revolution in Oriental countries, the Communist movement in the West might be reduced to nought." To support this inference, he argued that "world capitalism is deriving its main resources and its dividends from colonies, mostly in Asia... For that reason, it is necessary to shift the thrust into promoting and arousing the revolutionary movement in the Orient and to base it on the idea that the destiny of world Communism depends on the triumph of Communism in the Orient."[2] This point of view was widespread among the early Communists not only of India, but of other Asian countries as well.[3]

Even in his speech at the plenary session of the Congress on July 26, Roy sought to prove that to bring down European imperialism, it wolud be enough to have it expelled from the colonies, even without waiting for a socialist revolution to win out in Oriental countries. "Naturally," Roy maintained, "a revolution started by the masses [the peoples of Oriental countries—M. P.] in that stage will not be a Communist revolution, for revolutionary nationalism will be in the foreground. But at any rate, this revolutionary nationalism is going to lead to the downfall of European Imperialism, which would be of enormous significance for the European proletariat."[4]

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[1] R. A. Ulyanovsky, *Socialism and Emergent Nations*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1972, p. 22 (in Russian).

[2] *Bulletin of the Second Congress of the Communist International*, No. 1, pp. 1-2.

[3] True, Sultan Zadeh adhered to a different position. He said: "The social revolution will not come from the Orient and liberate Europe, but on the contrary, the Communist International must come to the aid of the working masses of the Orient to ease the process of social revolution for them." (See: *Bulletin of the Second Congress*, No. 2, p. I).

[4] *The Second Congress of the Communist International, Proceedings* ..., p. 118.

To sum up, Roy went out of his way to prove at the meetings of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions and at the plenary sessions of the Congress that the proletariat of Europe, which had battled for decades behind the banner of Socialism, could not hope for a victory until the Orient had won its political freedom. Only after the fall of the colonies, that is, after the abolition of the colonial system, could the proletariat of the West count on the successful conclusion of its revolutionary struggle. That one-sided theory bordering on peculiar Oriental fatalism produced an utterly wrong orientation divorced from the realities of life. Objectively, Roy's concept implied not the consolidation of the unity of all anti-imperialist forces of the West and the East, not rallying them around Soviet Russia, but, virtually, disuniting these forces and, consequently, weakening them and condemning them to defeat.

Lenin patiently and tactfully explained to Roy and other left Communists in the Congress Commission that their stand was mistaken, and said that "Comrade Roy goes too far", and his views "are largely unfounded".[1] That erroneous point of Roy's was deleted, as stated earlier on. It was replaced by the statement that world capitalism could be overthrown by two revolutions at once: the national liberation revolution in the colonies and the proletarian one in metropolitan countries.

Nevertheless, some of the starting points of Roy's original idea were left to stand. For instance, the closing part of the Second Thesis ran as follows: "Without the control of the extensive markets and vast field of exploitation in the colonies, the capitalist powers of Europe cannot maintain their existence even for a short time," and further on: "If not for the extensive colonial possessions ... the capitalistic structure of England would have crushed under its own weight long ago." This point is borne out by the opening lines of the Third Thesis: "Superprofit gained in the colonies is the mainstay of modern capitalism..."[2]

So, having said at the beginning of the Second Thesis that the colonies were "one of the major sources European capitalism is drawing its main strength from", Roy went on to make it quite clear at the end of the same Thesis

[1] *Bulletin of the Second Congress of the Communist International*, No. 1, p. 2.

[2] M. N. Roy. "Supplementary Theses on the National and Colonial Questions" (ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 489, pp. 4-8).

and at the beginning of the third one that the colonies and dependencies were the main source of subsistence and power of European capitalism and no sooner was it withdrawn than imperialism would collapse under its own weight.

The "Supplementary Theses" were cleared of Roy's original contention that the Communists should not support the bourgeois-democratic movements in the Orient, but not of the arguments behind this contention. The Ninth Thesis reads: "The revolution in the colonies is not going to be a Communist revolution in its first stages. But if from the outset, the leadership is in the hands of a Communist vanguard, the revolutionary masses will not be led astray, but may go ahead through the successful periods of development of revolutionary experience.[1] What could this contention mean? For, indeed, the national bourgeoisie had been at the head of the national liberation movement for years, as far as India was concerned. Now, speaking of Communists, there were almost none of them in most of the Oriental countries, or very few of them, as in India. So, how were the early Communists of the Orient, the Indian ones among them, to act?

To follow this thesis, they were to start not by supporting the national revolutionary forces but by ousting them to take leading positions in the revolutionary struggle. That is to say that, instead of uniting all anti-imperialist forces, they were to start fighting among themselves and that was to be a struggle in circumstances unfavourable for the Communists. That this was precisely what Roy had in view can be seen from his pre-Congress article in which he argued that once a proletarian Communist Party was created, it would immediately begin to "fight systematically against the policy of bourgeois nationalism and lead the mass of the people forward on their way to social and economic liberation".[2]

S. G. Sardesai angrily commented on the substance of the Ninth Thesis: "How on earth was a Communist Party in a subject country to secure the leadership of its freedom movement 'from the outset'? A task which called for immense labour and patience, even given a correct policy and tactics, was for Roy something to be achieved in the twinkling of an eye."[3]

[1] *The Second Congress of the Communist International*, p. 499.
[2] *The Communist International*, No 12, 1920, p. 2172.
[3] S. G. Sardesai. *Op. cit.*, p. 53.

The wording that was left to stand in the Sixth Thesis also causes some doubt regarding the same issue of co-operation with the national bourgeoisie. It says that since "foreign domination has obstructed the free development of the social forces" of the Orient and, consequently, was holding back the revolutionary development of the proletariat, "so to help overthrow the foreign rule in the colonies is not ... to endorse the nationalist aspirations of the native bourgeoisie, but *only* to open the way to the smothered proletariat there."[1] [Italics added—*M. P.*]. The original version of the "Supplementary Theses" did not have this "only". It was brought into the final text of the resolution already after the corrections made by Lenin and Maring.[2] However, not even the appearance of this word makes the sense of the wording of the "Supplementary Theses" any closer to the relevant assessment in the main resolution of the Congress drafted by Lenin. While the Eleventh Thesis of the main resolution, in paragraph D, underlined twice that "it is the duty of the Communist International *to support* the revolutionary [Lenin originally had it as "bourgeois-democratic"—*M.P.*] movement in the colonies and in the backward countries"[3] [italics added—*M. P.*], the "Supplementary Theses" said something different—"to help overthrow the foreign rule in the colonies is not to endorse the nationalist aspirations of the native bourgeoisie..." But the nationalist aspirations of the native bourgeoisie are nothing short of its struggle for the political independence of the country and, naturally, for its own political power in that country. Now, how could one have helped overthrow imperialist rule in the colonies (without a Communist Party in the field and with a weak proletariat), without backing up the national struggle of the native bourgeoisie and without establishing some temporary relations with it?

The correct starting point in this thesis was not followed up quite correctly. The proletariat is, indeed, interested in the overthrow of foreign rule, perhaps, even more so than all the other classes of colonial society. But that is just the reason why the Communists, as Lenin put it, "must enter

[1] *The Second Congress of the Communist International*, p. 498.
[2] See: A. B. Reznikov, "V. I. Lenin on the Problems of the National Liberation Movement in the East," *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 6, 1974, pp. 51-52.
[3] *The Second Congress of the Communist International*, p. 494.

into a temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in the colonial and backward countries".[1] That is to say that it was necessary to aid and support the national revolutionary elements, but, of course, not to merge with them, "under all circumstances uphold the independence of the proletarian movement even if it is in its most embryonic form", and teach the early Communist elements to appreciate their own particular objectives as being diametrically opposite to those of the bourgeoisie.[2]

The "Supplementary Theses" retained much of the firm determination to convince the Communists that they had, above all ("from the very outset"), to win the leadership of the revolutionary movement in the Orient, and, to that end, to speed up the *building* of Communist Parties, before getting down to establishing cooperation and contact with the forces of national liberation.

The Eighth Thesis is also worthy of note. Roy wanted the Comintern to limit itself to promoting the Communist movement in Oriental countries because he considered the masses and, in particular, the working class, to be "indifferent to the national liberation struggle".[3] He included in his Theses the argument that "In most of the colonies there already exist organised socialist or communist parties",[4] and that the task before them was to strive directly for a socialist revolution.[5] Following the deliberations of the Congress Commission, the reference to striving for a socialist revolution was deleted.

It was said twice in the Theses that in its first stage, the revolution in the colonies "will not be a Communist

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[1] V. I. Lenin, "Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 150.

[2] Ibid.

[3] *Zhizn natsionalnostei*, July 25, 1920, p. 2.

[4] See: A. B. Reznikov, "V. I. Lenin's Struggle Against Sectarian Distortions of the National and Colonial Questions", *Kommunist*, No. 5, 1968, p. 46. Very many of the early Oriental Communists were perfectly in agreement with Roy's conclusion about the need to promote and support nothing but the Communist movement in Asia as the only one capable of leading the masses to a victorious socialist revolution. The idea was accepted by Sultan Zadeh who, however, unlike Roy, correctly maintained that "nowhere in the Orient have the oppressed and enslaved masses yet succeeded in creating a close-welded revolutionary party". (See: *Zhizn natsionalnostei*, August I, 1920, p. 2).

[5] See: *The Bulletin of the Second Congress of the Communist International*, No 1, p. 1.

revolution" or that it would be "carried with a programme which will include many petty bourgeois reform clauses". As to the argument about the existence of organised Communist Parties in most of the Asian countries, it would seem at first glance to have been basically transformed to make the same contention apply to "revolutionary parties", not Communist.[1]

It might seem that the reference now was to national revolutionary organisations, indeed. But that was not so. Suffice it to read the Thesis to the end to find that these parties are the "vanguard of the working class", that they "strive to be in close connection with the working masses", express the will of the masses and, finally, "are the Proletarian Parties".[2]

That was the old proposition reshaped, which made itself felt elsewhere in the "Supplementary Theses". The wording, now familiar to us, of the idea of the cooperation of Communists with the leading forces of the liberation movement is noteworthy. "For the overthrow of foreign capitalism which is the first step towards revolution in the colonies, the cooperation of the bourgeois nationalist revolutionary elements is useful", the Seventh Thesis said.[3] First, unlike Lenin's resolution, it stressed only the usefulness of cooperation saying nothing at all about the obligation and duty of Communists or about the need for them to seek such cooperation. Second, the wording suggested by the "Supplementary Theses" clearly betrayed the utterly unrealistic starting point that the revolutions of liberation were already being led by the Communist Parties which could, if they so desired, "use" the national bourgeoisie supposedly offering to cooperate with them.

It will be opportune to consider yet another contention from the Ninth Thesis. Since the revolution in the colonies will not be Communist in its opening stages, it said, "it would be extremely erroneous in many of the Oriental countries, to try to solve the agrarian problem according to pure Communist principles."[4] Does that mean that such an attempt would have been acceptable in a certain few Oriental countries? And isn't that a reference to India which, in Roy's opinion, was already ripe for a socialist revolu-

[1] ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 489, pp. 4-8.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.

tion and where, consequently, the issue of the united front of all anti-imperialist forces had to be resolved in a different way from most of the dependent and colonial countries of the Orient?

One more example to cite from the Eighth Thesis. It said that "The Communist Parties of the different imperialistic countries must work in conjunction with these proletarian parties of the colonies, and through them, give all moral and material support to the revolutionary movement in general."[1] As much was said about the Comintern. Its relations with the revolutionary movement in the colonies were to be conducted only "through the medium of" local proletarian parties.[2]

This issue was dealt with in an essentially different way in the first resolution, drafted by Lenin. It said that the Communist parties of advanced nations must give *direct and immediate* constructive aid to the liberation movement and that it was *only the form* of support that should be *discussed* with the local Communist Party. That was followed by an explicit reservation: if such a party exists in a given Oriental country.[3] [Italics added—*M. P.*). Such a reservation was very significant as it took into account the widespread left sectarianism of the early Communists of the Orient and countered their nihilistic attitude to the national liberation movement.[4] The early Communists of Iran, for example, who suffered from left sectarianism at its worst and were still far away from winning the support of the mass of the people, nevertheless tried to place themselves at the head of the Ghilan Revolution "from the very outset" and to keep out its petty-bourgeois, revolutionary-democratic leaders. They, naturally, adhered to Roy's theory on aid to

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[1] ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 489, pp. 4-8.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Indian Marxist historian Gautam Chattopadhyaya saw this restrictive phrase, which was not to be found in the "Preliminary Draft" before it was adopted as the resolution of the Congress, as some evidence to show that Lenin's Theses had been amended at Roy's insistence (Gautam Chattopadhyaya, *Communism and Bengal's Freedom Movement*, Vol. 1, p. 33). This is a mistaken view. First, the phrase under consideration can be easily seen to oppose, rather than favour, Roy's leftist guidelines. Second, Lenin himself amended his Theses, following the preliminary discussion of that document before the opening of the Second Congress of the Comintern and as a result of the general debate in the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions at the Congress itself.

the national liberation movement. The outline priorities of the Communist Party of Iran, drawn up by Sultan Zadeh and M. Pavlovich in August 1920, pointed out that the revolution in Iran could attain its objectives of "expelling the English, ... bringing down the government of the Shah and abolishing the power of the landlords ... only if all help ... to the revolution (with arms, money and men) is given only through the Iranian Communist Party". The authors explained that to meet this requirement would mean giving the Communists an opportunity to "assume the leadership of the revolution in Iran".[1]

It is precisely the said points of the Sixth, Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Theses that presented that very uncertainty and puzzle that Maring spoke about, referring to the problem of the Communists' cooperation with the national revolutionary forces of Oriental countries.

There is an interesting summary by Pavlovich of Roy's "Supplementary Theses", which he made while the Second Congress was still in session. He wrote that "the essential point of Comrade Roy's inserts was that ... the International must help the liberation movement in the colonies not by supporting the liberal parties seeking political independence under the capitalist system, but by helping create and consolidate Communist Parties in the colonies. The leadership of the revolution in the colonies must be in the hands of proletarian parties."[2] Pavlovich, a delegate to the Congress, who must have been present at the meetings of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions, very accurately identified the essence of Roy's Theses. True, he saw no "leftism" in them.

Nevertheless, as a result of Lenin's criticisms and those of the Comintern Commission, the substance of Roy's "Supplementary Theses" was considerably improved. First, some of his particularly glaring leftist ideas were deleted and, second, a number of important and correct points, setting out Lenin's approach to the national relations and colonial questions, were included. But, as we have seen, the Theses did retain some of the wording and accent which in a way reflected the outlook of Roy and other "left" Communists. Incidentally, that outlook was peculiar not only

[1] ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 117, p. 1.

[2] M. Pavlovich, "Colonial and National Policies at the Second Congress of the Communist International", *Zhizn natsionalnostei*, August 10, 1920, p. 2.

to representatives of Asian countries but also to some RCP members who dealt with the problems of the national liberation and Communist movement in the East,[1] and to representatives of other parties.

Lenin could not fail to notice the above-mentioned elements of voluntarism and "leftism". Moreover, all available material indicates that he did notice them and worked a lot to explain them as being unscientific and unjustified. However, Lenin did not find it possible for tactical reasons —assuming the need to build unity with the budding Communists of the East who had but recently emerged from the nationalist environment—to press for the total exclusion of the views which their very exponents were to overcome in the course of their long ideological, theoretical and practical revolutionary activity. Lenin adopted a compromise approach and showed unmatched patience in explaining to Oriental Communists what they ignored or erred about.

There was yet another essential factor to note. By the time the Second Congress of the Communist International was due to meet, the first few Communist organisations had already appeared and were building up among Oriental nationals in Soviet Russia and in their own Asian home countries. In view of this, when the Second Congress took up the national relations and colonial questions, it had to consider an entirely new and very important problem of the relationship of the two movements of the East—the Communist and the national liberation movements. The Communists had not had to deal with that problem before. Lenin referred to that back at the Second Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East in November 1919. He said that the Communist movement of the East was "confronted with a task which has not previously confronted the Communists of the world".[2]

[1] See: R. A. Ulyanovsky, *Socialism and Emergent Nations*, pp. 75, 76, 79 (in Russian); M. A. Persitz "Eastern Internationalists in Russia and Some Questions of the National Liberation Movement (1918-July 1920)", *The Comintern and the East*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979, pp. 84-109. By the same author: "V. I. Lenin on the Left Sectarian Mistakes of the Early Communists of the East (1918-July 1920)", *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 2, 1970; A. B. Reznikov, "A Look at V. I. Lenin's Drafting of the Resolutions of the Second Congress of the Communist International on the National and Colonial Questions", *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 2. 1971.

[2] V. I. Lenin, "Address to the Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East, November 22, 1919", *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 161.

In his report on the national and the colonial questions at the plenary session of the Second Congress on July 26, Lenin twice called attention to the fact that the Communists still lacked experience to go by in answering the question "of how to apply the Communist tactics and policy in pre-capitalist conditions". He said: "So far our joint experience in this respect has not been extensive." [1] Lenin expected subsequent revolutionary practice to produce the evidence that was still missing for the resolution of many important issues of relation of the Communist and national liberation movements. "But more and more data," Lenin declared, "will gradually accumulate." [2] Roy interpreted Lenin's position in his own way when he commented in his memoirs on the remark made by Lenin in the Congress Commission: "We, Lenin said, were exploring a new ground and should suspend final judgement pending practical experience." [3]

As Roy claimed, Lenin had invited him to draw up alternative theses. And we have seen that they did retain some alternative elements. Besides, it is quite obvious that Lenin did not insist on their being deleted altogether in the belief that time and practical experience would have their say. The Comintern line on the national and colonial questions was expressed quite definitely in the Second Congress resolution drafted by Lenin.

It is indicative that when Lenin had to refer the Indian national revolutionary Bhupendranath Dutta to the Comintern's position on the problems of the East in the summer of 1921, he referred him to his Theses on the colonial question, leaving aside the "Supplementary Theses." [4]

It is no less indicative that Stalin recommended the Communists of India and China in 1927 to take Roy's Theses as their guide, [5] for he saw and approved of their "leftward" difference from Lenin's document. He main-

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[1] V. I. Lenin, "The Second Congress of the Communist International", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, pp. 242-243.

[2] Ibid.

[3] *M. N. Roy's Memoirs*, pp. 380-381.

[4] See: V. I. Lenin, "Letter of August 26, 1921, to Bhupendranath Dutta", *Collected Works*, Vol. 45, p. 270.

[5] See: A. V. Pantsov, "Lenin's Ideas on the National and Colonial Questions as Applied to China", *Experience and Lessons of History of the CPC for Its 60th Anniversary*. Guidelines of the Papers Presented to the Scientific Conference on April 7-8, 1981, Institut Dalnego Vostoka AN SSSR, Moscow, 1981, pp. 184-185 (in Russian).

tained that Lenin's Theses were of limited significance because they proceeded from an analysis of none but backward Oriental countries, like Afghanistan and Iran, while Roy's Theses took into account the high standard of capitalist development supposedly attained by China and India. [1]

The "Supplementary Theses" appear, therefore, to have been the product of a compromise between Lenin's and left revolutionary lines on the national and colonial questions. Lenin did not reject all kinds of compromises. On the contrary, he believed that—"Among Communists ... compromises are necessary under certain conditions". [2] And it is precisely such conditions that had shaped up at the Second Congress of the Comintern where a large proportion of the delegates from Oriental countries held "left" positions. Lenin preferred to carry on explanatory and educational work with respect to those pioneer Communists of the Orient, sincere revolutionaries and young men who had not yet been able to grasp Marxist science well enough for a variety of reasons. He proceeded from the assumption that though they had declared themselves Communists, they had not yet become Communists, but only wanted and were to become.

Neither could one fail to consider the fact that the Communist movement in the East arose in the circumstances under which "left revolutionary" views had deep-rooted objective reasons behind them. And in that case, to have simply rejected such views and judgements which reflected the earlier, immature stage of perception of Communist theory would have been tactically damaging to the unity of the proletarian movement with the liberation struggle in the East. Lenin said that the "left" mistakes were "growing pains". [3]

The erroneous concepts of the "left" Communists of Oriental countries could not be simply condemned and rejected. They had to be overcome by the "left" Commu-

[1] See: J. Stalin, "On the Chinese Revolution. An Answer to T. Marchulin"; and also: "Conversation with Students of Sun Yatsen University, May 13, 1927", *Works*, Vol. 9, pp. 232-238, 261 (in Russian).

[2] For instance, describing the Theses about the tactics of the Communist International at the Third Congress of the Comintern, Lenin said: "It is, of course, no secret that our Theses are a compromise". (See: V. I. Lenin, "Speech in Defence of the Tactics of the Communist International, July 1", *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, p. 468).

[3] *Lenin's Miscellany*, Vol. XXXVII, Moscow, 1970, p. 224 (in Russian).

nists themselves, as they studied Marxist-Leninist theory. As Lenin said, speaking of young people striving to become Communists, "Communism shall not be ... something to be learned by rote, but something that you yourselves have thought over." [1]

It is noteworthy that in reviewing the results of the Second Congress of the Comintern, Lenin pointed out only that the Congress had rectified the errors committed in Western countries by "Communists who were bent on turning to the 'left'", [2] without even mentioning the errors of the "left" Communists of the East, although it had spent a good deal of time and effort to work with them, to discover and to explain their errors.

Pointing out that the early Communists of the East simply could not understand much of Marxism, Lenin sometimes made certain concessions to their left revolutionary outlook so as to let them see for themselves the fallacy of their own views and help them see things right as soon as possible.

This position of Lenin's with regard to the budding Communists of the East, who had not yet overcome certain national prejudice, has been noted by Rostislav Ulyanovsky. He writes that Lenin, while preparing the "Preliminary Draft" to be approved by the plenary session of the Second Congress of the Comintern as a resolution, had deleted the absolutely correct and important point from the text that the more backward the country, the stronger is the hold and tenacity of the prejudice of national egoism and national narrow-mindedness in it. [3] Ulyanovsky writes: "The study of Lenin's manuscripts shows that the deletion of this perfectly correct point from the 'Preliminary Draft Theses'... was made by Lenin himself because it had not been understood by a group of Communists from Turkestan, Bashkiria and Kirghizia, who had written to Lenin on the eve of the Congress." [4] *The correct tactics of Communists*, Lenin wrote, "*...calls for concessions to elements that are*

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[1] V. I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Youth Leagues", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 289.

[2] V. I. Lenin, "The Second Congress of the Communist International", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 271.

[3] Cf. § 12 of V. I. Lenin's "Preliminary Draft..." (Vol. 31, p. 150) and the "Resolution of the Second Congress on the National and the Colonial Questions" (*The Second Congress of the Communist International*, p. 495).

[4] R. A. Ulyanovsky, *Socialism and Emergent Nations*, p. 78.

turning towards the proletariat whenever and in the measure that they turn towards the proletariat..." [1] [my emphasis —*M. P.*].

Apparently, it is this position of Lenin's that can be held to explain why the "Supplementary Theses" retained some points that diverged from the main resolution of the Congress on the national and colonial questions. The debate on the national and colonial questions at the Second Congress of the Comintern has been extensively covered by many bourgeois authors. And it is indicative that all of them saw nobody but Roy among Lenin's "left" opponents. What escaped their notice was the main thing, to wit, all Roy did was to express the left revolutionary views which were widespread among the budding Oriental Communists at the time. And the Theses he had submitted acquired a social value just because they reflected what were still immature—from the Marxist standpoint — ideological and political views of the incipient Communist movement in Asian countries. Therefore, they had to be worked on, and were worth being discussed and updated. Bourgeois historiography, while ignoring this important aspect of the matter, has been concentrating all attention on Roy's personality, inordinately extolling him and claiming him to have played just about the decisive role in the original formulation of the Comintern's Oriental policy. The Indian scholar, Dr. Naik, has attempted to prove, for example, that "among the leaders of the Communist International only Roy was developing an analysis of the different stages of development of the various colonies and the necessity of adopting suitable tactics for them". [2] John Patrick Haithcox maintains that "Roy played a highly significant role in the formulation of Comintern policy on the national and colonial questions", and that precisely "as a result of Roy's criticism, Lenin's theses on the national and colonial questions were modified". [3] Overstreet and Windmiller argue that Roy "acquired considerable prestige as the man who had forced the great Lenin to make concessions". [4] But these

[1] V. I. Lenin. "Left-Wing Communism—an Infantile Disorder", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 75.

[2] J. A. Naik, *Soviet Policy Towards India From Stalin to Brezhnev*, Vikas Publications, Delhi, etc. 1970, p. 11.

[3] J. P. Haithcox, "The Roy-Lenin Debate on Colonial Policy: a New Interpretation", *Journal of Asian Studies*, 1963, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 94-95.

[4] G. D. Overstreet, M. Windmiller, *Communism in India*, p. 33.

and similar assessments represent almost word for word repetition of the complacent pronouncements of Roy himself who wrote, in particular: "Lenin created a sensation by declaring that prolonged discussion with me had made him doubtful about his own Theses."[1] In reality, nothing of the kind ever happened. Lenin, far from being doubtful about his own Theses, found all the points of his preliminary draft to be correct. None of the positions of principle in Lenin's document was either disproved or even called in question. What the general discussion did show was the expediency of producing a somewhat more precise definition of the formula about "supporting the bourgeois democratic movement in backward countries". Roy pressed for that important point to be deleted, but it was reaffirmed and only a little specified. Lenin's Theses, which had become the resolution of the Second Congress, now pointed out that it was necessary to support the national revolutionary forces, that is, the bourgeois democratic movements that were revolutionary indeed. There was nothing new in point of principle in that "new" formula. As early as 1916, Lenin demanded that Socialists "must also render determined support" not to the national bourgeoisie of the East in general but precisely to "the more revolutionary elements in the bourgeois-democratic movements for national liberation".[2] Besides, a definition of the revolutionism of the national liberation movements was given in the fifth paragraph of Lenin's Eleventh Thesis and was left unchanged in the resolution adopted by the Second Congress of the Comintern. As to the second and last of the more or less essential changes made in Lenin's "Preliminary Draft", it was virtually aimed at toning down one of Roy's left-sectarian precepts which had survived to a certain extent in the "Supplementary Theses". Roy wanted aid to the national liberation movement cancelled or at least restricted. So, the Eighth paragraph of the "Supplementary Theses", as was shown earlier on, made it incumbent upon the Comintern and Western Communists to render that aid only through the local Communist parties. Lenin's Theses, which became the first resolution of the

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[1] *M. N. Roy's Memoirs*, p. 381.

[2] V. I. Lenin, "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination", *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964, pp. 151-152.

Second Congress on the national and colonial questions, contained the principle of providing direct assistance (that is, without any go-betweens) for the national liberation movement by all the Communist parties of capitalist countries (Ninth Thesis), and a new proposition limiting the role of local Communist parties in lending assistance to discussing its form (Eleventh Thesis, § a). Consequently, it was Roy's Theses that were, indeed, amended fundamentally, if not completely. Even though certain changes were made in Lenin's "Preliminary Draft", only two of them can be considered to be more or less essential in point of clarification which, however, only emphasised Lenin's guidelines. As to Lenin's and the Comintern's concessions bourgeois writers are so fond of talking about, these concessions were made, indeed, only not to Roy but to those budding Communist elements of the East who were on their way to Marxism.

The Second Congress of the Comintern played a tremendous part in the development of the Communist movement in the East, in defining its strategy and tactics, and in indicating the sure ways to follow to achieve the unity of all anti-imperialist forces.

Lenin and the Second Congress of the Comintern urged Oriental Communists to create a united anti-imperialist front (although this term was not formulated as yet,) and to support the national liberation movement and cooperate with the national revolutionary parties.

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Non-Marxist historians are quite unanimous in the view that the policy of cooperation with the bourgeois democratic national revolutionary forces of the East was enunciated only at the Second Congress of the Comintern and began to be pursued still later and that the adoption of that policy was due to the loss of hope for an early victory of Socialist revolutions in Western Europe. For instance, Professor Harish Kapur of the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva maintains that the Comintern and the Bolsheviks turned to Asia only in mid-1920 when they had discovered that it was impossible for the Western proletariat to win an immediate victory. It was now necessary for the Bolsheviks, he goes on to say, "to draw the Asian masses into an alliance with the workers and peasants of

Russia", to "revive their flagging spirits." [1] The same idea has been expressed by Demetrio Boersner. He believes that "the new tactics of aiding bourgeois nationalist movements directed against the Western colonialist powers" [2] only emerged at the Second Congress of the Comintern[3] but began to be applied after the First Congress of the Peoples of the East in September 1920 (Baku). Like other authors, he believes that "only after the end of the Baku Congress, and after the Red Army's retreat from Warsaw did the Comintern begin to turn to the East in a national-revolutionary spirit, proposing collaboration with bourgeois nationalists." Boersner goes on to formulate his idea with still more accuracy: "The new Comintern policy based on the failure of the immediate proletarian revolution in the West, consisted in supporting all Eastern governments and political movements which showed a tendency to fight for the complete independence of their countries from Western influence." [4]

None of the assumptions made can be accepted. What is utterly unfounded, first of all, is speculation about the supposedly "flagging spirits" of the Bolsheviks and the delay of the proletarian revolution in the West as accounting for the turn the Communists made towards supporting the national liberation movements of Asia.

In his report on the current situation at the Second Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East on November 22, 1919, Lenin said, in particular, that "the social revolution is maturing in Western Europe by leaps and bounds". Nevertheless, in the same address, Lenin urged the Communists "to base yourselves on the bourgeois nationalism which is awakening" among Oriental peoples "and must awaken, among those peoples, and which has its historical justification". He reaffirmed the correctness of the point of the RCP(B) Programme which said that the coming world Socialist revolution would consist of merging the struggle of the proletariat of all advanced nations against their own bourgeoisie with the "national wars"

[1] H. Kapur, *The Soviet Union and the Emerging Nations. A Case Study of Soviet Policy Towards India*, Michael Joseph Ltd, London, 1972, p. 12.

[2] Demetrio Boersner, *The Bolsheviks and the National and Colonial Question (1917-1928)*, Librairie E. Droz, Geneva; Librairie Minard, Paris, 1957, p. 97.

[3] Ibid., p. 92.

[4] Ibid., pp. 98-99.

of colonial and dependent countries "against international imperialism". [1]

In 1920, the international proletariat was passing from the tactics of a head-on attack against capitalism to trench warfare against it. Lenin reviewed the new situation in his "Theses on the Fundamental Tasks of the Second Congress of the Communist International": "...the Communist parties' current task consists not in accelerating the revolution, but in intensifying the preparation of the proletariat." [2] Nevertheless, not even at that time did the Bolsheviks rule out altogether the possibility of an early victory of the working class in some capitalist countries, which Lenin referred to in the same Theses.

In the meantime, the domestic situation of Soviet Russia was being consolidated. The Civil War was drawing to its victorious conclusion, and it was precisely in 1920 that Lenin declared that "it is with far greater assurance and determination that we can now set about a task that is dear to us, an essential task, one that has long been attracting us—that of economic development". [3] Yet in spite of that obvious consolidation of the Soviet system of government and the hope that still remained for a victory of the Western proletariat, Lenin repeated in brief, in June 1920, the formula that determined the Bolsheviks' attitude to the national liberation movement in Oriental countries, which he had presented in detail back in early 1916. In the outline of his Theses on the national and the colonial questions, Lenin once more pointed out that it was not enough just to recognise the right of colonies and subject nations to secession. What was necessary, he emphasised, was "effective aid to the revolutionary struggle and uprisings in the colonies". [4]

So the Oriental policies of the Bolsheviks and the Comintern were governed by the principles of Marxism-Leninism, not

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[1] V. I. Lenin, "Address to the Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East, November 22, 1919", *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, pp. 155, 159, 162.

[2] V. I. Lenin, "Theses on the Fundamental Tasks of the Second Congress of the Communist International", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 189.

[3] V. I. Lenin, "Report to the 8th All-Russia Congress of Soviets", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 489.

[4] V. I. Lenin, "Drafting the Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions", *Complete Works*, Vol. 41, p. 438 (in Russian).

by the time-serving considerations of the political struggle of the West European proletariat, although, naturally, the gains or setbacks of the international working class did essentially influence the development of the national liberation movement of Asian peoples.

To motivate his argument about the "new deal" of the Bolsheviks and the Comintern, Boersner pointed out that the RSFSR had signed all the first treaties establishing diplomatic and friendly relations with Oriental countries as late as 1921. The author makes the reader think that was the fault of the Soviet Government since it had refused to support the "moderately nationalist movements" until the very end of 1920. [1] But this line of reasoning holds no water either. Starting from October 1917, the Soviet government worked hard to establish friendly and diplomatic relations with the peoples and governments of Oriental countries. That was a hard battle, indeed, for it meant having to overcome not only the resistance of reactionary forces of the Oriental countries themselves but the outright opposition from the imperialist powers. Besides, the territory of all Eastern countries contiguous to Russia was used by imperialists as jumping-off ground for anti-Soviet armed intervention, while Turkey and China were even directly involved in it. It is clear that under such circumstances Soviet Russia signed those treaties with Eastern countries within amazingly short time-limits, which was due, above all, to the persistent and invariable Bolshevik policy of supporting the national forces of oppressed Asia as well as to the mounting liberation struggle waged by those forces.

In a further succession of arguments designed to justify his allegation of the "new" Bolshevik and Comintern line of supporting the national movements, Boersner undertook a comparative study of the decisions of the First, Second and Third Congresses of the Comintern on the Eastern question. He draws the conclusion that the First Congress was dominated by the Western tendency proceeding from the need for the European proletariat to win first and then help carry out the subsequent liberation of Oriental countries and set them on the road to Socialism, skipping capitalism. To take Boersner's argument at its face value, one would have to believe that the Comintern unequivocally

[1] D. Boersner, *Op. cit.*, p. 100.

denied the possibility of, and the need for, cooperation with the national bourgeois-democratic forces of the East. In his opinion, "instead of the Western tendency which showed itself fully at the First Congress and partly at the Second Congress, and which claimed that the proletariat of the West would revolutionise the East, the EECI now [before the Third Congress of the Comintern—*M.P.*] stated the opposite: the nationalists of the East would revolutionise the West!" [1] A letter sent by the E.C.C.I. "To All Member and Prospective Member Parties", indicated, as Boersner said, "the new line—that revolution will be impossible in the West unless it breaks out in the East." [2] Was that really so? A scrutiny of the documents of the First, Second and Third Congresses on the national and colonial questions will show the invariable basic priorities of the Comintern's Oriental policy in those years. The First Congress of the Comintern, although it proceeded, for quite valid reasons, from the possibility of a very early victory of the West European proletariat, laid it down in no uncertain terms in its political platform, adopted on March 4, 1919, that it "*will support the exploited peoples of the colonies in their struggle against imperialism*" [my emphasis—*M.P.*]. [3] This point, which was, incidentally, ignored completely by Boersner and other bourgeois authors in their analysis of the character of the decisions of the First Congress, was elaborated on and theoretically substantiated in the well-known documents of the Second Congress of the Comintern. As to the Third Congress, it viewed the national and colonial problem from the standpoint of the Second Congress.

An examination of the issue of the role and place of the national liberation movement in the world proletarian revolution also shows Boersner to be wrong. The First Congress did not pose it, as a matter of fact. The national liberation struggle in the East had not yet achieved a stage that would be high enough for that issue to be posed and decided. The Manifesto of the Congress only emphasised the decisive role of the impending victory of the West European proletariat for liberating the East from colonial oppression. [4] But as early as November 1919, at the

[1] Demetrio Boersner, *Op. cit.*, p. 107.
[2] Ibid., p. 107.
[3] *V. I. Lenin and the Communist International*, p. 134 (in Russian).
[4] Ibid., p. 143.

Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East, when the liberation movement in Asia was in full swing and continued to mount, and when some Communist elements had already appeared in it, Lenin suggested a solution to this problem. He said then: "It is self-evident that final victory can be won only by the proletariat of all the advanced countries of the world, and we, the Russians, are beginning the work which the British, French or German proletariat will consolidate. But we see that they will not be victorious without the aid of the working people of all the oppressed colonial nations, first and foremost, of Eastern nations." [1] Lenin considered that the "final victory" over imperialism was possible only as a result of the interaction and unity of the revolutionary anti-imperialist struggle of the proletarians of the West and the oppressed people of the East, since "the vanguard alone cannot achieve a transition to Communism." [2] The Second Congress of the Comintern had this thesis of Lenin's included in its resolution. The "Supplementary Theses", prepared by Roy, contained an important injunction due to Lenin's correction: "These two forces must be coordinated if the final success of the World Revolution is to be guaranteed", i.e. the international proletariat and the liberation movement of oppressed countries. [3]

In full agreement with this proposition, the ECCI letter "To All Member and Prospective Member Parties...", pointed out: "Without a revolution in Asia, the proletarian world revolution cannot be victorious." [4] In other words, nothing can be full if something is missing, there can be no *final* victory over imperialism without the victory in the East. That is all there is to it.

The Third Congress of the Comintern proclaimed the same idea, by and large. In its Theses on the world situation and the tasks for the Communist International, it was said: "The revolutionary popular movement in India and in other colonies has now become as essential a part of the world revolution, as the uprising of the proletariat in the capitalist countries of the Old and New World." [5]

[1] V. I. Lenin, "Address to the Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East, November 22, 1919", *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, pp. 161-162.
[2] Ibid.
[3] *The Second Congress of the Communist International*, p. 497.
[4] *V. I. Lenin and the Communist International*, p. 265.
[5] Ibid., p. 306.

There is nothing like any "new line" in there, supposedly designed to stress the priority and primacy of Asian revolution, nor is there any repudiation of the policy of support for the Oriental national liberation movement.

So the policy of supporting the national liberation movements, bourgeois-democratic and anti-imperialist in character, and one of alliance with them had invariably been pursued by the Bolsheviks before, during and after the October Revolution. There was no let-up in the implementation of that policy, nor any backtracking either by the Bolsheviks or by the Comintern. It is clear, therefore, that the policy of supporting the national liberation movements could not have "emerged" at the Second Congress and, therefore, cannot be called "new tactics". Of all the tactical guidelines of the Bolsheviks, it was, perhaps, one of the oldest and immune to changes, in spite of the change of the strategic phases of the Russian revolution.

Yet it is this unchanged policy that does not suit the bourgeois scholars because it demolishes their concept of the self-interest of the Soviet and Comintern policies in respect of the liberation movement in the East. Having declared that it was not until the middle or even the end of 1920 that the Comintern and the Bolsheviks set out to support such movements, bourgeois authors naturally had to fill the gap and state what policy, preceding that period, was pursued from 1917 to 1920. There are some divergencies of opinion among the authors just mentioned in their replies to this question. Harish Kapur, Zafar Imam and the Indian authority on Soviet history, Dr. Naik, believe that before 1920 the Bolsheviks had taken practically no interest in the East, being completely preoccupied with the West. Their policy in the East was passive. Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Quelquejay write about the same thing: "In the period of War Communism the Bolshevik party leaders' faith in the victory of the revolution in the West was still great and, therefore, the East figured little in revolutionary forecasting." [1] In Harish Kapur's opinion, right up to the middle of 1920 the Bolsheviks had taken "only a theoretical interest in Asia or simply issued appeals to the Asian people to revolt against their internal and external oppres-

[1] A. Bennigsen et Ch. Quelquejay, *Les mouvements nationaux chez les musulmans de Russie. Le "Sultangalievisme" au Tatarstan*, Mouton & Co., Paris, 1960, p. 126.

sors". [1] Dr. Naik had even discovered that between May and November 1918 (God knows why he had chosen that period of time, rather than any other?!), Lenin had made reports and speeches on international affairs eight times, but never mentioned India or the national and colonial questions at all. In his opinion, there was no mention of it either in the invitations sent out to working-class organisations of various countries to join the Comintern, nor was there any mention of the national and colonial question at the First Congress of the Comintern in March, 1919. [2]

Unlike the said writers, Boersner believes that the Comintern and the Russian Communists were by no means passive in the East during the period of the revolutionary upsurge in the West. It was just the other way round. In his opinion, they were following a particularly vigorous policy in Asia at the time. However, it was not one of backing up the national liberation movement but one of assisting the "ultra-left rebellions" designed to quickly escalate into Socialist revolutions. He writes: "Already in the middle of 1920, the old Communist policy of supporting ultra-left rebellions in the Eastern countries was slowly yielding to the new tactics of aiding bourgeois nationalist movements..." [3]

One cannot fail to agree that even before the Second Congress of the Comintern, the Bolsheviks had been active enough in the East. But they did not follow the course that Boersner writes about. In those days, too, they continued their tried-and-tested policy of aiding the struggle of oppressed peoples for their national liberation. However, the ultra-revolutionary tactics did exist, and there were even some attempts to apply it, but who did so was not Lenin or the Comintern, but many of the pioneer Communists of the Orient infected as they were with the infantile disorder of "leftism". All of the above-mentioned writers, Boersner among them, completely ignore this most important factor as well as the fact that Lenin had strongly opposed the attempts to apply left-sectarian tactics in the East. Without taking all that into account, it is just impossible to understand many of the developments which took

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[1] H. Kapur, *Op. cit.*, p. 11.
[2] J. A. Naik, *Op. cit.*, p. 97.
[3] Demetrio Boersner, *Op. cit.*, p. 97.

place within the framework of the Comintern and the Asian Communist movement.

Boersner seeks to justify his line of reasoning by allusions to the so-called Ghilan Revolution of 1920-1921 in Northern Iran. He considers the events connected with it as a concrete manifestation of the Bolshevik policy of backing up the "ultra-left rebellions".[1] But the Ghilan Revolution was not such a rebellion. It was a national liberation movement of peasants, the urban poor, bourgeois tradesmen and liberal landlords. And that revolution was defeated largely because the leftist elements that predominated in the Central Committee of the Iranian Communist Party at the time attempted to push the Ghilan movement artificially on to the track of Socialist change, contrary to the actual conditions and Lenin's explicit warning against "left" follies. [2]

Nor is there any real ground to support the opposite contention about the passive role or even total inactivity of the Bolsheviks in the East during the years that immediately preceded the Second Congress of the Comintern. In actual reality, the Bolshevik policy in the East in those days, too, was very active, and that not only in the sense of political, diplomatic and practical action in support of the national liberation struggles of Oriental nations and peoples, but in the sense of propagation of Communist ideology among the Chinese, Koreans, Turks, Iranians, Indians and other foreign working men who were in Soviet Russia at the time. As has been shown earlier on, the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party and other Party bodies set up special political agencies to conduct propaganda among Oriental nationals and to foster their Communist movement. Soviet Communists did a great deal to help the politically advanced elements from Oriental countries to get down to creating their own national Communist groups. This kind of work can by no means be called passive or tantamount to ignoring the East but it was not a policy of assisting "ultra-left rebellions" either.

The emergence and development of the Communist movement in the East took place in the context of a sweeping, indeed, unprecedented upsurge of the national liberation

[1] Ibid., pp. 68-69.

[2] For details, see: S. L. Agayev and V. N. Plastun, "The Background to the Drafting of the Programme and Tactics of the Iranian Communist Party in 1920-1921," *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No, 3. 1976.

struggle of oppressed peoples in the Asian continent. The anti-imperialist movement was taking on an increasingly pronounced character of a mass movement, bringing peasant uprisings and workers' militant strikes into the mainstream of the struggle against colonialism. That was the starting point of contact of the two movements—the Communist and the national liberation movements—which brought with it the problem of their relations and interaction in Oriental countries which had nothing like it before. That was not a simple problem. The national liberation movement had sprung up in India and in some other Asian countries a long time before and, perfectly consistent as it was with the anti-colonial aspirations of almost all classes of Oriental society, it constituted a great and organised force by that time. The Communist movement, on the other hand, was taking its initial steps forward, and that in the face of great difficulties: it had no adequate base to stand on in the labour movement; it was weakened by the left-sectarian philosophies of their leadership and most ruthlessly persecuted by the colonial authorities. The problem of the relation and interaction between the two movements was further compounded by the widespread infantile disorder of "leftism" afflicting the early Communists of the East.

The problems involved in the development of the emergent Communist movement in Asia and those of its interaction with the national liberation struggles were first posed by Lenin in his Address to the Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East (November 22, 1919). The ways Lenin tentatively outlined in his search for solutions to the problems that had thus arisen implied cooperation of Eastern Communists with the nationalists of the subject nations along with overcoming left-sectarian deviations, adjusting Communist ideology and organisation to the specific conditions of the backward East and working hard to establish an anti-imperialist alliance of all the revolutionary liberation movements of Asia with the international proletariat and, above all, with the Soviet Republic.

By the end of 1919, not any earlier, it had become clear that the "old" national and colonial question had acquired novel and essential aspects because of the emergence of the Communist movement in Asian countries. Therefore, it was only natural to bring it before the very next internati-

onal forum of Communists which was the Second Congress of the Comintern.

The First Congress (March 1919) could not debate that question in every aspect just because the question was not yet ripe. The Communist elements in the East were still hard to detect and the problem of relation between the Communist and national liberation movements in the colonial and dependent countries had not yet arisen. The First Congress itself was in fact merely propagandist, as Lenin put it, for it was only spreading the fundamental ideas among the world's proletariat, and only issued the call for struggle.[1]

That was also the approach it adopted to the national and colonial question. The basic mission of the Second Congress was to work out the theoretical guidelines for the strategy and tactics of the world Communist movement both in the West and in the East.

Consequently, there is only one thing that is right in the arguments of our opponents, and that is that it was the Second Congress that was the first to undertake a comprehensive debate of the Eastern question within the framework of the Comintern. But that was due not to any loss of hope for an early victory of the European proletariat or to any turn of the Bolsheviks away from the "flagging" West to the inflamed East. There were other reasons behind it. It was necessary, for one thing, for the "old" course the Bolsheviks had tried out in supporting the national liberation movements of the East, to be accepted by the international Communist organisation to be built upon and to become a policy of all Communist parties. For another, it was necessary to consider the new question of relation of the Communist and bourgeois democratic movements in Asian countries proper and to decide it in the context of the social and economic situation in the colonial East so as to oppose left-sectarian tenets. Finally, this question had to be discussed as being integral to the overall problem of world revolution whose strategy and tactics were worked out by the Second Congress of the Comintern.

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[1] V. I. Lenin, "Report on the International Situation and the Fundamental Tasks of the Communist International, July 19", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 234.

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While urging the Communists to support the national liberation movements and to cooperate with the parties of the national bourgeoisie, Lenin and the Comintern called upon them to preserve their ideological and organisational autonomy within the democratic movement, urged them to let the Communists see the specific tasks they had to accomplish and stressed the need for them to put themselves in the long run at the head of their people's revolutionary movement. It was possible to accomplish these tasks only at the cost of sustained work of organisation and revolutionary propaganda amongst the masses all the time, "even in a situation that is not revolutionary",[1] as Lenin said.

It was not easy at all for the Indian "left" Communists with Roy at their head—because of their ingrained petty-bourgeois nationalism, long-lasting involvement in conspiratorial national revolutionary organisations and for some other reasons—to get rid of their left-sectarian views, and that was not long in adversely affecting the communist work Roy's group started among the Indian immigrants in Turkestan.

It was even before the Second Congress closed that the Indian Communists had finished drawing up a "General Plan and Programme of Work [in Preparation] for the Indian Revolution".[2] To judge by a report of Indian Communists on the work they had done in Turkestan and by some other material, the General Plan posed three major tasks: first, the convocation of an all-India congress of revolutionaries and the establishment of an all-India revolutionary centre capable of preparing and holding, in particular, this congress, second, the immediate formation of a Communist Party of India and, third, the immediate launching of the military and political training of revolutionary forces.

Some of the measures outlined under that Plan began to be carried out in Moscow, where the Indian Communists

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[1] V. I. Lenin, "Speech on the Terms of Admission into the Communist International", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 251.

[2] "Report of Work Done in the Three Months of October 1920-January 1921 by the Provisional All-India Central Revolutionary Committee", p. 1.

stayed until about mid-September, and continued in Tashkent where they had moved from the Soviet capital on October I, 1920.[1]

[1] *Izvestia*, Tashkent, October 3, 1920. One could hardly have taken less than a fortnight to reach Tashkent from Moscow at the time. For that reason we believe that Roy's group must have left the capital around September 15.

Chapter III

Ideological and Political Battles Among Indian Revolutionary Émigrés in the Soviet Republic. The First Indian Communist Group Formed

By calling, in their General Plan, for the convocation of an All-India Revolutionary Congress and the formation of a national revolutionary centre, Roy and his group must have sought to demonstrate their commitment to the decisions of the Second Congress of the Comintern regarding a united front of all anti-imperialist forces. The same object was behind Roy's rather frequent declarations about the aspiration of Indian Communists for bringing together the multifarious elements of Indian society in the name of their country's liberation. In his Statement on Communism made before a general meeting of Indian immigrants in Tashkent late in October 1920, Roy declared: "The Indian revolution, as far as the overthrow of British rule is concerned, has to be done by a heterogeneous body. We (Communists) want also to overthrow British rule. For this purpose, we must work in conjunction with all the revolutionary elements of India.... As far as the overthrow of British rule we all agree, and let us advance hand in hand."[1]

In reality, however, Roy did not give up his left-sectarian views even after the Second Congress of the Comintern, and went on, in particular, to hold a negative stand on cooperation with the national bourgeoisie and various national revolutionary organisations and parties. That was consequent upon his earlier theory of a direct Socialist revolution, which he tried hard to develop and justify

[1] Statement on Communism, Made by Roy before a General Meeting of Indian Revolutionaries and Immigrants in Tashkent, October, 1920. (See: ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 488, p. 9).

contrary to the decisions of the Second Congress of the Comintern, and evident from his activities in the Indian immigrant community of Tashkent.

A letter of August 9, 1920, from the Indian delegates of the Second Congress of the Comintern to the British Communists said: "We Communists must believe that a Social Revolution, and not only a bourgeois one, is just as possible for India as for any other country." In September, Roy wrote his article "The Social Revolution in India...",[1] while he was still in Moscow, in all probability, in which he sought to prove that India was on the point of making a proletarian revolution.

He maintained that India was a capitalist country, properly speaking, because her "feudalism has been destroyed by English imperialism which has brought the working masses into submission to the bourgeoisie." Roy arrived at the conclusion that it was not only in the Indian cities but in the countryside as well that the national bourgeoisie held its sway, and, therefore "the mass discontent is directed against most intensive capitalist plunder." Strongly impressed as he was by the sweeping popular uprisings in India in 1920, and, more particularly, by the strike struggles of the Bombay, Madras and Calcutta proletariat, and peasant rebellions, Roy argued that "in spite of India's backwardness in the sense of her capitalist development, the proletarian revolution has, as a matter of fact, already got under way there."

Overstating the independence of the working class and the class consciousness of the Indian proletariat, Roy gave a one-sided interpretation of the sum and substance of the united front of anti-imperialist forces. He saw it as nothing but a means by which the Communists had to centralise India's entire revolutionary movement of liberation, quickly take over the leadership of that movement and steer it towards a Socialist revolution. The measures under the General Plan were to meet Roy's objective for a swift Communist takeover in the Indian revolutionary movement.

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[1] *Zhizn natsionalnostei*, October 10, 1920.

A Provisional Indian Revolutionary Committee Established

One function in the execution of the General Plan was to "convoke as soon as possible an All-India Revolutionary Congress composed of delegates from all existing revolutionary parties, factions and elements within India". Moreover, the Congress was to produce "a centralised Programme and Plan of Work and an All-India Revolutionary Party" and "elect from its midst an All-India Central Revolutionary Committee" to bring off the job forces and, thereby, ensuring the success of the Indian revolution. In the opinion of Roy and his group, such a congress was to be an unprecedented development in the Indian people's struggle for liberation and one of tremendous historic significance.[1]

It might seem at first glance that the measures thus outlined reflected the actual need to create a united front of India's anti-imperialist forces and, consequently, were directed towards the implementation of the basic decisions of the Second Congress of the Comintern on the national and colonial questions. But one could not think so if one considered the actual realities of colonial India where the liberation movement had been developing for years under the leadership of the bourgeois nationalist Indian National Congress party whose well-known leaders, above all, Mahatma Gandhi, were by no means disposed to let Roy's Communist group take over the leadership of the liberation movement. Yet it was just that that Roy had counted on in the belief that he could eliminate the bourgeois leadership of the masses easily and simply by calling a revolutionary congress, virtually abolishing the Indian National Congress party and steering the revolution towards a Socialist perspective.

Properly speaking, the Roy group made no secret of their intentions, after all. The Indian Communists' letter of August 9 to the Communists of England, which had already been mentioned, contained some unrealistic proposals side by side with a sensible and reasonable plan for cooperation to develop the revolutionary movement in India. The British Communist Party was recommended to

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[1] "Report of the Work Done in Three Months of October 1920-January 1921 by the Provisional All-India Central Revolutionary Committee." (See: ORCSA, s. 5402, r. I, f. 488, p. 1).

send a delegation of Communist organisers and Indian agitators to India *to "take the leadership of the masses away from the nationalist politicians and passive resisters* and ... organise the Indian workers on class lines for political freedom and economic and social emancipation". [Italics added—*M. P.*]. That was an unrealistic and primitive plan which, besides, contradicted the main point in the decisions of the Second Congress of the Communist International about the unification of all anti-imperialist forces and Communist support for the revolutionary liberation movement in Oriental colonial countries.

Roy's project meant throwing the national bourgeoisie into the arms of imperialism, splitting and weakening the liberation movement, isolating the incipient Communist movement from national revolutionary anti-imperialists, from the mass of the people and from the working class itself. That is to say, it objectively narrowed down the battlefront and condemned the Indian people to defeat.

The very first practical move made by Roy and his group in pursuance of the plan they had sketched out made a rift and conflict inevitable even in the midst of Indian immigrants in Turkestan.

On Roy's initiative, the Indian delegates to the Second Congress of the Comintern formed a Provisional All-India Central Revolutionary Committee, consisting of Communists only, still in Moscow or on their way by train to Tashkent. As stated subsequently in a report on the Revolutionary Committee's work, the Committee was formed "as a voluntary body to cope with the complexities of the situation until such time as the calling of the Congress" and the election of the representative Central Revolutionary Committee.[1] M. N. Roy was elected Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee.

Later on, in a letter of December 30, 1920 to the Govern-

[1] Unfortunately, we do not know when and how the decision to set up a Provisional All-India Central Revolutionary Committee was taken. The only thing that is clear is that this happened either in the latter half of August or in September 1920, that is before the arrival in Tashkent of the Indian delegates to the Second Congress of the Comintern, as confirmed by the Revolutionary Committee's progress report which had a footnote about the "arrival (in Tashkent) of the present Provisional All-India Central Revolutionary Committee" (ORCSA, s. 5402, r. I, f. 488, p. 1). In other words, the Roy group had arrived in Tashkent, constituted already as a Revolutionary Committee.

ment of the Bukhara People's Soviet Republic, Roy explained that the "said committee has been organised to conduct all political work among Indian immigrants both in the territory of the RSFSR and in Bukhara, Afghanistan and adjacent countries, and must also lead revolutionary work in India."

When forming the so-called All-India Revolutionary Committee with so all-embracing executive functions, Roy and his group totally ignored not only the Indian national revolutionaries who stayed in other countries (as Germany, the U.S., and France) but also those who lived and worked in Soviet Turkestan. That was the Indian Revolutionary Association, led by Abdur Rabb Barq, which had been in Tashkent since July 1, 1920. Incidentally, while M. N. Roy and A. Mukherji had tried, if rather half-heartedly, to establish certain contacts and cooperation with the Berlin group, they had simply kept the Association away from any involvement in setting up the Revolutionary Committee. In the Revolutionary Committee's report of January 1921, mentioned earlier on, M. N. Roy explained that separatist action by the "nature of the immigrants" because of which, he claimed, "no election of the provisional Committee could be entrusted to them, beyond an indication of their choice for the committee".[1]

In actual fact, the All-India Revolutionary Committee was set up not as a central organ of coalition and cooperation of diverse political forces to bring them together to fight for a common goal, but as a tool by which to bend those forces to the will of one of them which considered itself to be the most revolutionary of all.

M. N. Roy's sectarian intolerance was particularly evident during the election of an Organising Committee to convoke the All-India Revolutionary Congress at a general meeting of Indian immigrants. The Committee, under pressure from M. N. Roy and his group, was made up of M. N. Roy himself, A. Mukherji and M. Shafiq, that is to say, of Communists only. The leaders of the Association strongly protested at two meetings against such a one Party make-up of the Committee and called for their own representatives to be included in it. The Association's position was quite right for the Organising Committee was to have existed as a coalition body. And yet the Association's protest was

[1] ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 488, p. 116.

twice rejected. [1] Not even Roy himself tried to conceal, in substance, the sectarianism of his actions. In a letter to the Revolutionary Committee of the Bukhara People's Soviet Republic, he declared that "the existence of individual groups among the Indian immigrant community must not be encouraged". It was not, naturally, the groups that mattered, but the existence of different organisations Roy would not reckon with.

In consequence, the Indian Revolutionary Association was to be deprived of all independence, whether it liked that or not, and "had to be subordinated", as Roy pointed out in the said letter, "to a centralising unit—the All-India Central Revolutionary Committee" which had been formed without its participation at all—and that through no fault of its own.

The leaders of the Association, among them P. Acharya, an Indian Communist, and M. Shulman of Sovinterprop, were right in stating in February 1921 that "the Committee was only an affair of Comrade Roy", not of all the Indian immigrants. (CPA IML).

That was how, even before their arrival in Tashkent, Roy and his group had, by setting up the Revolutionary Committee, laid what was in effect the structural ground for conflict with the Revolutionary Association. True, on October 27, that is, after almost a month of their stay in Tashkent, the Revolutionary Committee unanimously resolved that Abdur Rabb Barq, the head of the Indian Revolutionary Association, "be co-opted as an additional member of the Provisional All-India Central Revolutionary Committee." [2] But that act could change nothing since the Association intended to retain its organisational and political independence which M. N. Roy would not accept.

It was somewhere late in November or early in December that the Revolutionary Committee expelled Abdur Rabb

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[1] It is quite interesting to note how the Revolutionary Committee presented the election of the Organising Committee in its report: "The idea of calling the Congress was ... confirmed in the open Assembly and the Organising Committee was twice re-approved as the body to carry on the work until the convoking of the Congress, by the mass of the immigrants. The occasion of this re-affirmation of the Committee and its work was the attempt, twice made, to unseat the members and to put others in their place by the leaders of the Indian Revolutionary Association" (ORCSA, s. 5402, r. I, f. 488, p. 2).

[2] See: Minutes of the Meeting of the Provisional All-India Central Revolutionary Committee, Held October 27, 1920. Tashkent.

Barq on an insignificant pretext, and protested on December 18 against the Soviet authorities in Turkestan lending direct assistance to the Indian Revolutionary Association.

In the same document, the Revolutionary Committee asked the Comintern to maintain relations with the Association and other Indian revolutionary forces only through the Central Revolutionary Committee in Tashkent. [1]

The Comintern tried to put out the conflict and pressed for cooperation of Indian Communists with the Association. On December 22, 1920 G. I. Safarov, on ECCI instructions, arranged a "conciliatory meeting" of the Revolutionary Committee, and proposed Abdur Rabb Barq's reinstatement. Yet, on Roy's insistence, the proposition was turned down. In protest, P. Acharya tendered his resignation to the Revolutionary Committee on December 22, 1920, declaring that "it is impossible for me to work in this Committee any longer with Comrade Roy." The Revolutionary Committee refused to accept the resignation, but early in January 1921 expelled Acharya from membership. [2]

The conflict sharpened to the extent of disrupting revolutionary work among the Indian immigrants in Tashkent.

The problem of relationship between the Communists and national revolutionaries, as it had arisen in the Indian immigrant community, could be resolved only by applying the guidelines of the Second Congress of the Comintern which meant establishing truly friendly cooperation between the two groups on a broad anti-imperialist ground for the sake of the common goal of liberating India from British rule. Besides, by working along such lines the Communist group, consolidating its ideological and organisational independence, would have obtained an opportunity of conducting explanatory work among the immigrants to keep revolutionising the liberation struggle, and could have won prestige and recognition by its political activity, commitment and devotion to the movement for India's national independence and by its understanding of the prospect ahead for the revolution in that country.

But the "left" Communists, led by Roy, were in a hurry. The natural course of events, as envisaged by the Second Congress of the Comintern, did not suit them at all, and

[1] Minutes of the Meeting of the Provisional All-India Central Revolutionary Committee, Held December, 27, 1920. Tashkent.

[2] See the Indian Revolutionary Committee's letter of Jan. 24, 1921, to P. B. Acharya.

they tried to speed it up. They were more concerned with the actual making of a Socialist revolution than with painstaking preparations for one, organisation and propaganda work, notably, the hard and time-consuming job of winning the masses over, and so on and so forth.

The root cause of the conflict between the Revolutionary Committee and the Indian Association resided in M. N. Roy's "left" sectarianism and in his and his followers' misunderstanding of the substance of Lenin's "Preliminary Draft..." and of the decisions of the Second Congress of the Comintern about a united anti-imperialist front, and in organisational and political actions which ran counter to those documents. That was what gave rise to the organisational incompatibility of the "left" Communists and national revolutionaries within the framework of the Revolutionary Committee just as the instant incompatibility of their fundamental ideological positions. In their assessment of the character of the revolution to be made in India and of the ways to make it, Roy and his group failed to find, or, to be exact, refused to seek common ground with the Association, for they stuck to the positions of self-will and subjectivism, reluctant to reckon with objective Indian realities.

In November 1920, Indian Communists drafted a programme for the Provisional Revolutionary Committee and published it on December 1.[1]

It would be natural to expect that document to discuss unity of action with the national revolutionary forces because one of the Revolutionary Committee's principal objectives was to build and cement such unity. But the draft Programme contained generally the same guidelines of Roy's, if a little veiled, regarding a direct socialist revolution. The draft Programme sought to prove, without any ground whatsoever, that there was no base to support the ideas of patriotic nationalism in India, and argued just as groundlessly that Indian working people would understand nothing beyond the demands and slogans of a Socialist character.

At a time when India was literally rocked by a massive

[1] *Izvestia*, Tashkent, December 1, 1920, p. 1. The paper stated that it published only a few "extracts from the draft Programme". But a check of the document published against its other version kept in archives showed that it was the full text. Discrepancies in it were essentially due to editing because different translators translated it from English (ORCSA, s. 5402, r. I., f. 486, p. 3).

patriotic national liberation movement, the document asserted that the "sentimental propaganda... of the sanctity of the homeland and things like that could not breathe patriotism into the ignorant and oppressed masses. In the last 50 years, the national movement was limited to restricted sections of the educated middle classes... Therefore, the Provisional All-India Revolutionary Committee proposes organising the urban proletariat first and then the mass of the poor peasantry to support the demand of economic and social freedom." And the energy of the masses would "overthrow foreign imperialist rule", the draft said, only when it was properly organised and received "real political direction". In the context of the document, the formula of "real political direction" could have but one meaning—the direction towards a Socialist revolution.

While proclaiming the Socialist revolution and Socialist propaganda in India as top priorities once again, the draft Programme, nevertheless, called for all of India's revolutionary forces to be united to overthrow foreign domination. The document said that the Revolutionary Committee would "take steps towards uniting various revolutionary elements with the common aim of overthrowing foreign imperialist domination". But that was followed up by such political and economic demands as totally precluded the prospect of unification.

The document said that, following the overthrow of the foreign yoke, the Revolutionary Committee "must exercise a revolutionary dictatorship until the desire of the majority, that is, the ignorant and disunited masses, becomes clear as regards the system of government to be established". And to rule out any doubt as to the character of the provisional authority of the Revolutionary Committee, the drafters of the Programme added: "The dictatorial power of the Provisional All-India Central Revolutionary Committee will rest on the support of the revolutionary army and that of workers and peasants." It was further explained that "the real liberation of the masses can be achieved only through a system that will turn over the political power of the State into the hands of the productive element of society, i.e. the workers".[1]

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[1] The copy in archives has "i.e. working people" written instead of "i. e. workers".

In the economic area, the draft Programme envisaged the abolition of feudal relations in the countryside and private-property relations in the cities. Paragraph A of the Programme called for "the expropriation of all large estates, belonging to the *zamindars*, *sardars*, *talukdars*, *jaghirdars* and other aristocratic and feudal owners. The expropriated land will be nationalised and distributed among those who till it...".

Besides, the draft Programme suggested launching preparations for a gradual Socialist reshaping of the countryside. Paragraph B read: "In order to show the peasants the advantages of Communist farming, State-funded Communist agricultural farms will be built". The State was to grant the landowning peasants the use of modern agricultural machinery. Paragraph C referred to the "confiscation of all private property in excess of a certain amount to be specified by the revolutionary government". Paragraph D projected the "nationalisation of railways, waterways, mines, telegraph and other public services which will operate without profit[1] under the control of workers' councils". Paragraph E suggested "establishing workers' control at all major enterprises" and pointed out that "workers ... will take over and will be responsible for the production, distribution and exchange of prime necessities".

Naturally, a programme envisaging a revolution that would proclaim the provisional dictatorial authority of an all-Communist Revolutionary Committee, abolish the national bourgeoisie and end in establishing the power of the proletariat could not form the base for a united front of various anti-imperialist forces of India. M. N. Roy and his group did not see that at all and believed that their Programme contained "the minimum demands of a social revolution as well as bourgeois reformism necessary to the present state society in India".[2]

The Indian Revolutionary Association preached opposite principles. In the opinion of Abdur Rabb Barq, the only type of revolution that could take place in India in the immediate future was a political revolution, that is, a revolution of national liberation, and only after it and only under certain conditions could preparations for a socialist revolution be started.

[1] The archive copy said these enterprises would derive no surplus value.

[2] ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 488, p. 2.

In his message of July 29, 1921 to Georgy Chicherin, Abdur Rabb Barq[1] wrote: "To those who know something about the ethnological and ethnographical conditions in India it should be clear that a Communistic revolution is impossible there in the near future; and that even communistic propaganda shall always remain a problem so long as the English government prevails in the country." He went on to contend that Communists would manage to come in touch with the masses of Indian proletariat and win them over "only when the foreign domination is at an end", and then only if "the local government [that will have come to power after the expulsion of the British—*M.P.*] "cannot ameliorate the conditions of the masses".

Abdur Rabb Barq believed that even if it had been possible to conduct the propaganda of Communism among the masses, it could still not have been accepted by the people in large measure. He produced quite a few arguments trying to prove this point. First, it would have been impossible anyway to convince the masses "of the justice of communistic ideals" since the proletariat of India was "steeped in darkest ignorance and in grossest superstition... They would not follow a person with a material programme rejecting religion, morality and castes, preaching equality of the 'pariah' with the Brahmin..." Second, communistic propaganda "will have served the English by throwing into their arms the ruling chiefs, big landlords, local bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie and all those who shall be the losers by the social revolution". In Abdur Rabb Barq's opinion, it was nationalist propaganda alone that had reason for existence in India at the time.

As we see, Abdur Rabb Barq could not be regarded either as a partisan of Communism or as a man who had a good knowledge and understanding of Marxism-Leninism. Nor did he pretend to be anything of the kind.

In the same letter, Abdur Rabb Barq only asserted that the Association had "pronounced socialist tendencies" which, however, would take long in showing up. Yet his judgements did contain quite a few sensible inferences that reflected the actual state of affairs in India, which the Communists had to reckon with.

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[1] Abdur Rabb Barq was in Moscow at the time where he had come from Tashkent in the second half of January 1921. He never went back to Tashkent.

That is to say that M. N. Roy advocated an immediate Socialist revolution in India, while Abdur Rabb Barq claimed that there could be nothing but a nationalist revolution.

Roy maintained that the level of the class-consciousness of the working-class movement in India was very high, and, therefore, a proletarian revolution could be said to have actually got under way in India. Supporting M. N. Roy, A. Mukherji wrote in his letter to G. Safarov (April 27, 1921): Although "religion in India dominates the minds of the workers and peasant masses," it was, nevertheless, enough to remove the "artificially inculcated (in the masses) religious prejudice" [just that simple!—*M.P.*] for them to side with the Communists. By contrast, Abdur Rabb Barq declared with good reason that the Indian proletariat was numerically small, and that it had not yet separated itself from the peasantry and was "split into a multitude of castes and creeds", and that it was "only caste- not class-conscious so far".

Roy sought to prove that the only propaganda that was possible and necessary in India was of a Socialist kind and that nationalist patriotic propaganda would not be understood by the people since "the Indian movement... looked more like that of European, rather than Asian countries by its economic, political, and social conditions. The peoples of India can be united only on economic ground. Pure nationalist propaganda will not succeed."[1] Abdur Rabb Barq challenged that point and considered that the only propaganda that the Indian people could understand had to have a purely national, anti-English character since the Indian "proletariat desires no social revolution, but will accept the revolution that the bourgeoisie may force on it".

M. N. Roy and M. Mukherji ruled out the possibility of cooperation with the national bourgeoisie since, in point of fact, they called for its party—the Indian National Congress—to be abolished. Mukherji maintained in his letter of April 27, 1921 to Safarov that instead of the Congress, it was necessary to create a new "Central Revolutionary Nationalist Party". Abdur Rabb Barq argued, in his turn, that "the present situation in India demands an unbroken and united front against English government" and that

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[1] M. N. Roy's letter to the ECCI (October or November 1920).

"nothing should be done which could ... destroy the present political unity against the common enemy."[1]

M. N. Roy, in point of fact, ruled out cooperation even with petty-bourgeois nationalist revolutionaries and called for them to submit to Communist leadership. Abdur Rabb Barq advocated the political and organisational independence and full rights of the Indian Revolutionary Association.

Only on one issue did M. N. Roy and Abdur Rabb Barq hold similar views. As Lenin put it, speaking about Roy, both of them had gone too far in overplaying the role of India and of the Orient in general in the world Socialist revolution, and most definitely showed their nationalist egoism. In a letter of August 9, 1920 to the British Communists M. N. Roy pointed out that the revolution in England [and, consequently, in other capitalist countries as well —*M.P.*] would be impossible "so long as imperialistic capitalism can enjoy the right of unrestricted exploitation of the colonial peoples and resources." Abdur Rabb Barq went along with that when he declared. "I believe that is so, indeed." (CPA IML). It may be recalled that in his first few months and weeks in the Soviet Republic he used a different formula—"the destinies of the world depend on India".

Naturally, an identity of views on this particular issue alone was not enough. And, of course, there was no unity of action coming about between the Revolutionary Committee and the Association. It proved impossible to establish cooperation with the European group of nationalist revolutionaries either, even though many of them had a liking for the ideas of Communism and were on their way to accepting Marxism. We shall yet revert to that.

Still less could there be any contact with the Indian National Congress, the bourgeois nationalist anti-imperialist party which led the liberation movement and enjoyed great prestige among various social sections of the population of India, including the great mass of the working people. Properly speaking, it was not M. N. Roy's object to establish it at all, rather he was anxious, at whatever cost, to prove the Congress to be unrevolutionary and so make out his case for the Communists to put themselves at

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[1] Quoted from Abdur Rabb Barq's letter of July 29, 1921 to G. V. Chicherin.

the head of the Indian people's liberation struggle "from the very outset", as stated in the "Supplementary Theses".

In dealing with the various leaders of the national liberation movement, M. N. Roy or A. Mukherji criticised their ideological positions so sharply and conducted so outspoken propaganda for Socialist slogans that they could not, naturally, get any positive answer to their offer of cooperation.

One interesting document in this respect was A. Mukherji's letter of December 30, 1920 to an Indian nationalist leader Shiva Prasad Gupta on behalf of the Revolutionary Committee. He began by communicating: "The Indian Communists in Tashkent propose to hold an All-India Revolutionary Congress of parties, organisations and individuals... it is necessary that we Communists and you Nationalists work hand in hand for the destruction of British rule." That was followed by an array of unsubstantiated arguments in an effort to disprove the policy guidelines of those whom the author was supposedly going to cooperate with. He sought to convince the recipient of his letter that, first, "a nationalistic revolution in the present condition of India is not possible", second, that "by these national revolutions the parasites of India or the intellectuals and capitalists will be the only gainers", third, after such a revolution, "the workers of India will go on suffering as they are doing today, if not more", and, fourth, its makers are "cheats and adventurers" who would throw the Indian people into a bloody civil war. He closed his letter by claiming that the only kind of revolution suitable to the India of his day was a "revolution of the working people and poor peasants", like the one that had been made in Russia.

And today, six decades later, one can easily understand the revolutionary impatience of the first Indian Communists. Subjectively, those were sincere and honest people, intransigent and dedicated fighters against British colonial domination. They were sincere in their outlook, in their misconceptions and in their passions, and often made themselves the victims of their own wishful thinking. They were very anxious to bring down all the oppressors at one stroke just as, they thought, the Bolsheviks of Russia had done.

They saw Indian reality not as what it really was but looked at it in the light of the victories of the Russian October Revolution which did away both with imperialist interventionists and domestic capitalists and landlords at once. Why not do the same thing in India, they wonder-

ed. And so they put forward their own slogans for a simultaneous social and national revolution and tried to prove that Socialism was already quite attainable in India, too, and called for working-class hegemony in the on-going movement and for the dictatorship of the proletariat to be established. It seemed to them that since that had proved to be practicable in economically backward Russia, with an overwhelming peasant population, it would be possible in India as well.

However, the conclusions of the first Indian Communists were mistaken for they one-sidedly took into account nothing but the surface aspect of the developments in question while ignoring the serious distinctions between Russia and India.

Russia was an imperialist power that oppressed scores of nations herself, while India was an oppressed colonial country. Russia had attained an average standard of capitalist development in town and countryside, and high concentration of industry, and had a proletariat with a relatively long history behind it, which had passed through the crucible of three revolutions. India was a country with pre-capitalist relations predominating in the countryside, a deep-rooted caste system, a scarce and endemic industrial proletariat still in the making and small-scale manufacturing industry.

Russia had a historically tried-and-tested Bolshevik Party with Lenin at its head, and the majority of the people following it. In India, on the other hand, the majority of the population followed the national bourgeois party—the Indian National Congress led by Mahatma Gandhi, committed to non-violent resistance only — while Communists were few and far between.

This simple comparison alone shows how immature the tactical line of M. N. Roy and his followers was.

It is only human to understand those most honest subjective ambitions of the small group of the first Indian Communists. But there is a long way from understanding to approving them. Objectively, such ambitions were holding up the development of the anti-imperialist struggle in India, obstructing the creation of a united anti-imperialist front, and giving rise to reckless appeals for bypassing the yet untraversed stages of that movement and ignoring the real level of the political understanding of the masses.

That is to say, it was typical of the "Left"-wing disorder of the first Indian Communists to follow the Russian ex-

perience mechanically, borrow it undialectically, and ignore the specific historical situation and the particular national environment they had to operate in.

On January 3, 1921 M. N. Roy and A. Mukherji addressed an official letter to Gandhi on behalf of the Revolutionary Committee. Having informed him of the decisions of the Second Congress of the Comintern and the Comintern's readiness to support the liberation movement, the authors of that letter announced that an All-India Congress would be convoked early that summer and that it would "create a single central revolutionary party uniting all groups and organisations".

But, in point of fact, the Indian National Congress was that very mass anti-imperialist party which had Mahatma Gandhi as its leader. Consequently, in asking Gandhi to send "as many delegates as possible" to the projected revolutionary congress, M. N. Roy and A. Mukherji wanted him to agree if not to the Indian National Congress being abolished as a party, at least, to it giving up the leadership of the national liberation movement, which was clearly unacceptable to him.

Almost a year later, M. N. Roy and A. Mukherji came forward once again with a document setting out their views on Indian realities. On December 1, 1921 they addressed a special Manifesto, on behalf of the Communist group of Indians in Soviet Russia, to the 36th Indian National Congress in Ahmedabad. In that message, they sought to convince the INC leaders that their current policies expressed in the demands of *swaraj* and *swadeshi* (economic independence) and their tactics of non-cooperation and civil disobedience, of boycott of foreign goods and a return to handicraft production with the ancient spinner as its basic tool were either to meet the interests of tradesmen and manufacturers and so were senseless or, though they were of great general importance, impracticable, for the Congress ignored the aspirations of millions of working people of town and countryside. Yet it is the interests of those masses that the Congress was to express, first and foremost, since, as it was pointed out in the Manifesto, "the possible end of foreign domination, in itself, is not a sufficient inducement for the people at large". The mass of the people "are thinking of what good the declaration of swaraj could do them".[1]

[1] "Manifesto to the 36th Indian National Congress, Ahmedabad,

The Manifesto was meant to persuade the leaders of the national liberation movement of India that it was the separately occurring social struggle of the working class and the peasantry that mattered alone, while the movement for national independence was of secondary importance. It sought to prove that a social revolution was already taking place in India, which could not be led by the "political apparatus of the propertied class", as the Congress would inevitably become, should it fail to speak out for the interests of disinherited masses. The Manifesto said: "If the Congress would lead the revolution which is shaking India to the very foundation, let it not put its faith in mere demonstrations and temporary wild enthusiasm. Let it make the immediate demands of the trade unions ... its own demands, let it make the programme of the kisan sabhas its own programme, and the time will soon come when the Congress will not stop before any obstacle. It will not have to lament that swaraj cannot be declared on a fixed date because the people have not made enough sacrifice. It will be backed by irresistible strength of the entire people consciously fighting for their material interest".[1]

As we see, those authors still proceeded from Roy's wrong presumption about the two movements, and, besides, they regarded the Indian events not so much as national liberation struggle as social risings of workers and peasants for their economic interests.

It stands to reason that not even that document could become the key to a united front of all anti-imperialist forces of India. It could not do so, because, apart from an unacceptable lecturing tone, it actually put forward the programme for converting the Congress from a national bourgeois party into an organisation capable of predominantly leading the economic movement of workers and peasants. Putting the matter that way was obviously unrealistic.

Nevertheless, the Manifesto differed from the preceding one. It no longer called for the Indian National Congress to be dissolved. Moreover, it acknowledged the possible victory of the movement it led if, of course, the Congress supported the workers' and peasants' special demands. In general, the criticism of the Congress, although it was

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1921", *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol. I, p. 347.

[1] Ibid., pp. 346, 352-353.

maximalist, however, was essentially fair in drawing the INC attention to the pressing needs of the working people, the decisive force of the national liberation movement.

The Manifesto called for an independent workers' and peasants' party to be created, apparently outside the Congress. In other words, although M. N. Roy and A. Mukherji did not urge the setting up of a united anti-imperialist front, they did take the first step towards recognising the wisdom of cooperation with the Congress.

A. V. Raikov pointed out, besides, that the criticism in the Manifesto was not only against the Congress, but against the nationalist revolutionaries as well.[1]

It was useful, beyond doubt, for the latter since all of them overlooked the great mass of the working people in their work, and resorted to plotting and individual terror.

Although, as M. N. Yegorova has conclusively proved, the Manifesto had been produced too late for the Ahmedabad session of the Indian National Congress[2], it was printed and welcomed by the left INC paper *Spasat* in 1922.

The "left"-sectarian and unscientific approach of Roy-Mukherji, although it had somewhat softened, stemmed from disbelief in the anti-imperialist potentialities of the national bourgeoisie and implied Communist leadership of the liberation movement "from the very start". That made for a fairly prolonged isolation of the early Indian Communists from the masses and kept various groups of Indian revolutionaries in exile from being united on a common anti-imperialist platform.

Relations between Roy's Revolutionary Committee and Abdur Rabb Barq's Indian Revolutionary Association in Tashkent became increasingly tense. This was particularly evident since the Communists, never being content with their immigrant status, decided to declare themselves the Communist Party of India.

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[1] A. V. Raikov, *The Nationalist Revolutionary Organisations of India in the Struggle for Freedom*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1979, p. 198 (in Russian).

[2] See: T. F. Devyatkina, M. N. Yegorova, A. M. Melnikov. *The Origin of the Communist Movement in India*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1978, pp. 157, 175 (in Russian).

The First Organised Group of Indian Communists

M. N. Roy believed that to organise the Indian Communist Party was so simple a thing that it was enough to get down to it to win success in no time. Information he received in Moscow about increased emigration from India into Soviet Turkestan inspired him beyond all measure. In December 1920 M. N. Roy related: "Three months ago, while we were still in Moscow, we heard with great joy that thousands of Indian emigrants were coming to Turkestan... We hoped to find those emigrants to be good material for revolutionary work."[1]

Roy considered that it would be possible to create the Indian Communist Party in Turkestan before long and in that way to bear out, in practical terms, his statement before the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions of the Second Congress of the Comintern that Communist parties already existed in most of the colonies and the "only" concern of the Comintern and the Communists must be "to create and promote the Communist movement", ignoring, as a matter of fact, the national liberation struggle. One more reason why Roy was so much in a hurry to declare the creation of a Communist party was because such a party was to play the main, leading role, naturally, "from the very start", in his ambitious plans for centralising the revolutionary movement of all India. Besides, by that time Roy had the experience of the organisation of the Communist Party in Mexico to draw upon and he was eager to use that experience in his native land.

Lenin looked at the matter from an entirely different standpoint as he guided himself by the actual situation in the Orient, as it had historically evolved, not by emotions or desires, as Roy and "left" Communists did. While calling for independent Communist organisations to be formed in colonies,[2] Lenin was opposed to artificially speeding up that process. In a report to a plenary session of the Second Congress of the Comintern, he even questioned the very pos-

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[1] See: "Indian Immigrants in Turkestan", report made by Comrade Roy at a general meeting of Indian revolutionaries and immigrants called by the Comintern's Turkestan Bureau (ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 488, p. 6).

[2] See: V. I. Lenin, "The Second Congress of the Communist International", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1974, p. 244.

sibility of proletarian parties being created in backward Oriental countries at the time. That is just what he said: "It would be utopian to believe that *proletarian parties in these backward countries, if indeed they can emerge in them*, can pursue communist tactics and a communist policy, without establishing definite relations with the peasant movement and without giving it effective support."[1] [Italics added—*M. P.*]. Lenin saw what a hard job it was for the early Eastern Communists to create Communist parties. At a meeting of the Second Congress Commission Lenin pointed out: "the Indian Communists have not yet succeeded in creating a Communist party in their country..."[2] And even if they eventually succeeded in forming one, it would, of necessity, be a small party with limited opportunities for an indefinite period of time.[3]

Unable to disprove Lenin's arguments at the Congress of the Communist International, Roy attempted to oppose them in actual practice by speeding up the organisation of the Indian Communist Party. The idea that he could create a Communist party quickly must have occurred to him before the Second Congress of the Comintern. In any case, in his pre-Congress article, Roy put forward two propositions: first, a "top priority" for India was "to create a strong, well-disciplined, centralised and genuinely revolutionary Communist party", and, second, that the number of workers in India for such a party to be organised was "great enough".[4] At a meeting of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions Roy assured everybody that in India already "there exist elements for the creation of a strong Communist party".[5]

As subsequent events have shown, it seemed to Roy at

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[1] V. I. Lenin, "Report of the Commission on the National and the Colonial Questions, July 26", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1974, pp. 241-242.

[2] See: *Bulletin of the Second Congress of the Communist International*, No. 1, p. 2 (in Russian).

[3] This reference to Lenin's remark "And even if ..." belongs to Alfred Rosmer who was on the Oriental Commission of the Second Congress of the Comintern during the Lenin-Roy debate (See: Alfred Rosmer, *Moscou sous Lenine*, Vol. I, Paris, François Maspero, 1970, p. 118).

[4] *The Communist International*, No. 12, 1920, pp. 2170-2171 (in Russian).

[5] *Bulletin of the Second Congress of the Communist International*, No. 1, p. 1 (in Russian).

the time that the existence of a group of Indians who had declared themselves Communists was quite enough for the Indian Communist Party to be considered as existing in fact. *Zhizn natsionalnostei*, which printed on July 25, 1920 the *Manifesto of the Revolutionary Party of India*, signed by Roy, had a footnote saying that the document had been brought to the editorial office by "a member of the Communist Party of India, Comrade Roy". The same issue carried a poorly argued article by G. Torchinsky, staff writer, "The Revolution in India and Its Conditions", asserting: "We know absolutely nothing at present about either the material or intellectual forces of the Communist Party of India, but the very fact of its existence can by no means be ignored since the natural base for a Communist party in India is too broad."

As stated earlier on, the Indian delegates wrote a letter to the British Communists and, separately, to the Secretary of the British Communist Party on August 9, only two days after the Second Congress of the Comintern was over. After congratulating the working people of Great Britain upon the creation of their national proletarian party, they stressed that it was necessary "to form a Communist party in India quickly" and expressed the hope that they would "soon ... be able to report its creation...".

Under Roy's pressure, Indian Communists were overhasty in dealing with the matter. For instance, the First Congress of the Communist Party of China (which opened on July 23, 1921) had been preceded by a substantial amount of work done over two or three years to form Communist groups of Chinese workmen in Russia and in a number of cities of China proper, particularly among intellectuals. Besides, there was an all-China preparatory conference of Communists in March 1921, that is, in advance of the Congress. The Communist movement among the Iranian seasonal workers in Russia and among limited groups of revolutionary intellectuals in Iran proper had taken at least four years to develop before the first congress of the Iranian Communist Party became possible (June 1920).

Almost two and a half years had passed from the origin of a Communist movement among the Turkish POWs in Soviet Russia to the First Congress of the Turkish Communist Party in Baku in September 1920. That went on parallel with Communist work developing in Turkey itself which, as a matter of fact, made it possible to convene the congress at all.

The first congresses of the Chinese, Iranian, and Turkish Communists were attended by twelve, forty-eight and seventy-four delegates respectively, representing the Communist movement of their countries. The first Indian Communists acted differently at the beginning in Soviet Russia. They wanted to begin from the end by proclaiming the Communist Party to be in existence, without first setting up Communist groups in India proper and without doing sustained propaganda among a small number of Indians who had assembled in Soviet Turkestan and even without concerting their action with Marxism-bound Indian revolutionaries in other countries.

However, the group of Indian Communists itself was divided on the issue of forming a party at once. Roy was in a hurry and shortly after the Second Congress of the Comintern he was prepared to declare the formation of the Communist Party of India. In a letter of September 1, 1921 to the ECCI he announced that "the organisation of the Communist Party of India began in September, exactly a year ago",[1] that is, back in Moscow. As I have shown earlier on, its origin may, in fact, well be dated from August 1920, too. Roy did not want to consider the fact that only four budding Indian Communists, or five, if you count his American wife Evelyn Trent-Roy, had gathered there at the time, and they did not achieve, nor could they have achieved as yet a full ideological unity and a necessary level of understanding of Marxist theory.

Prativadi Acharya held a different view which looked convincing as he stated it. On January 30, 1921 he wrote to the ECCI: "When Comrade Roy proposed setting up an Indian Communist Party, I declared clearly and openly that it would be better not to have a party so named at all than to have one composed of different sorts of people calling themselves Communists, if a good and disciplined organisation realising what Communism must be like and really anxious to achieve it was impossible."[2]

Other members of the Indian group probably supported Roy and his work of "organising" the Communist party went on, although the closing act of forming it was, they decided, to be staged in Tashkent where many could be expected to want to join the Communists.

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[1] CPA IML.
[2] CPA IML.

Roy's group is known to have arrived in Tashkent on October 1, 1920. The actual situation in the Indian immigrant community in Turkestan did not look as rosy as Roy and some other members of his group had pictured it to themselves while in Moscow. It became clear very soon that the creation of the Communist party, a sufficiently complex problem by itself, was even more complex in that particular case. Emigré Communists found themselves among young nationalist revolutionaries, mostly, involved in the Caliphate movement. There was practically no working-class element among them, yet those who came from land-owning peasants' families and the urban petty bourgeoisie predominated. Most of them were just beginning to be involved in political activities, which did not go beyond patriotic nationalism and belligerent Islamism. Incidentally, Roy, greatly disappointed as he was by Tashkent realities, did not even want to acknowledge their anti-imperialist role. In an official Revolutionary Committee report of January 1921, about the work done in the course of three months, he wrote: "These Caliphate pilgrims from India are all of them lacking in even the most elementary political consciousness, having no nationalistic or revolutionary sentiments whatsoever and declaring openly that they came to fight for Islam, not for India."[1]

That was a rather subjective and, obviously, unfair assessment which characterised Roy himself, his limited outlook and inability to form an alliance with nationalist revolutionaries, rather than the people he wrote about. In this particular case he showed quite clearly how easy it was for him to go to extremes, which was generally typical of the "left" Communists because it was not so much a scientific analysis of social-economic conditions as their own self-will that governed their theorising.

Roy and his group started doing propaganda among the Indians. Its main object was to convince the immigrants that a nationalist revolution would be no revolution, properly speaking, because it would not free the working people from the local exploiters who were no better than the English. In his memoirs, Roy described the way he did propaganda: "I had not spoken to them at all about Communism. I only told them that driving British out of India would be no revolution, if it was succeeded by replacing foreign

[1] ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 488, p. 1.

exploiters by native ones. I had to explain the social significance of a revolution: that, to be worthwhile, a revolution ... would have to be a Communist revolution."[1]

Of course, the "native exploiters" were no better than the English, nobody would quarrel with that. But was it possible to get them out of the way to advance to Socialism without getting foreign exploiters out of the way? Could the Indian working people, considering the level of their understanding, the degree of their political organisation, the extent of perception of their class status and of their role, resolve at once two basically different problems, appropriate to two different stages of the revolution? Did the realities of India at the time offer an opportunity of linking up these two stages of the revolution, that is to say, was it likely for India in 1920 to have a Socialist revolution that would also have resolved the problems of a bourgeois-democratic revolution, as had been the case in Russia, or a bourgeois-democratic revolution rapidly developing into a Socialist one? There was no opportunity of this kind in India. Therefore, the whole scheme Roy and his followers had thought up was impracticable.

The propaganda that was done with a view to creating a Communist organisation, natural and indispensable though it was by itself, struck, in that particular case, at the political aspirations of national revolutionaries, discredited and affronted their ideals, which was quite inadmissible.

Only a minority of politically advanced *émigrés* could stomach Roy's propaganda. Most of them, however, were simply discouraged by it. And well they could, because they were told, as a matter of fact, that the cause they were fighting for and were ready to uphold, arms in hand, the cause for the sake of which they had condemned themselves to privation by having embarked on such hard work, was senseless or, in any case, unnecessary for the majority of the Indian people.

What made Roy's propaganda even more repellent to the bulk of the immigrants was, of course, the hostile work of British agents who had wormed their way into the midst of the revolutionaries, although that work was not essential in shaping the outlook of the people who hated British colonialists as their worst enemies.

[1] *M. N. Roy's Memoirs*, p. 464.

Roy's precepts went against the very heart and soul of those men, inspired as they were by the sweeping upsurge of the national liberation struggle in their country and anxious to step it up and bring it off by their own action. Neither can one overlook the mentality of Indian immigrants, many of whom were the prisoners of their religious conceptions and habits. In short, to debunk the ideas of nationalism altogether and oppose the principles of Communism against them would have been unjustified in the eyes of national revolutionaries in substance and pointless for tactical reasons.

When Indian Communists set up three-week classes of history, economics, problems of the working-class movement and Socialism in Tashkent, they found no students to attend them. A report on the Revolutionary Committee's work said that the "reason for the partial failure of these classes was the preconceived idea on the part of many of the immigrants that a knowledge of political economy and social science went against their religion, and there were no registrations for these classes, but only for the language classes".[1]

Lenin always condemned the practice of imposing any tasks on the masses that they were not yet ripe enough to accomplish. He made a very instructive remark in this sense in January 1923 when he said one could not commit oneself to implanting Communism in the countryside straight away. "As long as our countryside lacks the material basis for Communism, it will be, I should say, harmful, in fact, I should say, fatal, for Communism to do so."[2] This idea, expressed by Lenin in a different way back in 1918[3] applied to India and to the Indian nationalist revolutionaries no less than it applied to the Soviet countryside of the day.

Some Soviet men who worked with Indian immigrants saw Lenin's idea borne out by practical experience. For instance, M. Shulman wrote on December 1, 1920: "It is fairly well known that it is impossible to do purely Com-

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[1] ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 488, p. 2.

[2] V. I. Lenin, "Pages from a Diary", *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1976, p. 465.

[3] See: V. I. Lenin, "Fourth Conference of Trade Unions and Factory Committees of Moscow June 27-July 2, 1918." Report on the Current Situation, June 27, 1918, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, Progress Publishers, 1965.

munist propaganda either here [among the Indian immigrants—*M. P.*] or in India." First of all, "the masses must receive political education compatible with their mode of thinking, with their mentality, with their habits, traditions and religion".

About as much was said by S. Dimanstein, a ranking member of the Council for International Propaganda in Tashkent, subsequently the chief editor of the *Zhizn natsionalnostei*. He pointed out that "the economic condition of the Orient shows how difficult it is to conduct a straightforward and consistent Communist policy over there and how little the proletarian elements are prepared to digest our principles. The old traditions, habits and creeds of the Orient add to these difficulties."[1]

Neither Roy nor the first Indian Communists who followed him realised that. They insisted on Indians making a Socialist revolution while very many of them could not see what Socialism was supposed to be at all and why it was better than Islam. It is clear, therefore, that the effort to form a Communist party proved far less productive than Roy expected while he was in Moscow.

The formation of the Communist Party of India was officially announced at a meeting of Indian Communists, called by Roy in Tashkent on October 17, 1920. It consisted of M. N. Roy, Evelyn Trent-Roy, Abani Mukherji, Roza Fitingof,[2] Mohammad Ali (Ahmad Hasan), Mohammad Shafiq Siddiqi, Prativadi Acharya. Mohammad Shafiq[3] was elected Party secretary. The resolution, approved by the meeting, pointed out that the Party "adopts the principles proclaimed by the Third International and undertakes to work out a programme adopted to the Indian conditions."

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[1] *Zhizn natsionalnostei*, April 1922, p. 2.

[2] *Roza Solomonovna Fitingof* (b. 1895), a member of the CPSU since 1918. In 1919-1920, she worked in the Administration Department of the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR under V. D. Bonch-Bruyevich and L. A. Fotieva. As R. S. Fitingof told K. Shevelev, who talked with her in May 1973 in Leningrad at this writer's request, she "worked as assistant to Lenin's secretary Fotieva", sorted out Lenin's mail. Roza Fitingof met A. Mukherji when he was in Moscow for the Second Congress of the Comintern and became his wife. A. Mukherji expressed his gratitude to her in the pre-

The protocol was signed by Roy as chairman of the meeting and Acharya as secretary. At the end of the year, as can be seen from the Minutes of the Meeting of the Indian Communist Party in Tashkent, on December 15, 1920, it was decided to set up the Party's executive of three men: Acharya, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India, Shafiq, its Secretary, and Roy, member of the Central Committee.[1]

It is not difficult to notice that the newly formed "party" consisted of the same five Indian Communists who attended the Second Congress of the Comintern. Only two newcomers joined them—Mohammad Ali and Roza Fitingof.

It is noteworthy that the decision about the official registration of the Communist Party of India in Turkestan was taken at a meeting of Communists as late as December 15, and the official letter announcing the formation of the Indian Communist Party was sent to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Turkestan on December 20,[2] two months after the Party had been officially declared founded. The delay may have been caused by the desire to wait for the Communist Party to grow in number at least a little, and that proved impossible until mid-December, 1920.

It was at that meeting of December 15 that the group admitted three members for three months' probation: Abdur Qadir Sahrai, Mahmud Ali-Shah Kazi and Akbar Shah.[3] A few days later three more probationers were admitted, as A. Mukherji reported in his letter of December 30, 1920 to Shiva Prasad Gupta, an Indian nationalist leader: "We have formed an Indian Communist Party of 13 members." Only after that did the Indian Communists decide to register as the Communist Party of India.

The Comintern received no immediate formal notification of the creation of the Communist Party of India either. Moreover, Paragraph 5 of the English copy of the minutes of the first meeting of the Indian Communists on October 17,

[1] Ibid., p. 1. Perhaps, at a later stage, in view of the sharpening conflict between Roy and Acharya, the latter may have been replaced by Abani Mukherji. This, apparently, should be taken to account for Rafiq Ahmad's report about A. Mukherji's joining the Party's Working Committee (Muzaffar Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India and Its Formation Abroad*, National Book Agency Private, Ltd., Calcutta, 1962, p. 34).

[2] Party Archives of the Uzbek Republic, s. 60, r. 1, f. 194, p. 1

[3] Ibid., p. 1.

stated that it was agreed that "information, as to the formation of the ICP, would be sent to the III International, as soon as the Program of the Party is ready".[1] Yet it proved impossible to draw it up at that time. It was as late as January 2, 1921 that its draft, prepared by Mukherji, was discussed at a meeting of Communists, but it was rejected at M. N. Roy's insistence.[2]

At that time, the Comintern recognised the Indian Communists in Tashkent only as a group. The list of the parties and organisations invited to the Third Congress of the Comintern (endorsed by the Small Bureau of the ECCI late in April or early in May 1921) mentioned "India: The Communist Groups (consultative vote)".[3]

These facts most palpably demonstrated the difficulties in forming a party which Lenin had warned about. Regrettably, Roy's left-sectarian tactics, far from removing the natural obstacles along the road taken, raised even more of them.

So it must have been just because the story of the first Indian Communist organisation had so clearly proved Lenin to have been right and the "left" to have been wrong that Roy distorted it in his *Memoirs* in defiance not only of the facts as they were, but even of his own assessments which he had given in 1920-1921.

Let us recall that in the Revolutionary Committee's report, drawn up in January 1921, he pointed out that none of the immigrants had even "the most elementary" political consciousness, let alone Communistic consciousness. Roy said so contrary to the truth just to claim credit for overcoming great difficulties in the political education of the immigrants and in building a Communist organisation. But a few decades later, Roy, in a bid to justify—better late than never—his former hasty actions he had taken contrary to Lenin, resorted to an outright untruth.

To begin with, he claimed that his "work among the educated minority of the Indian immigrants in Tashkent has produced a greater result than he expected, and even greater than he wanted". He wrote that due to his propaganda effort, "Most of them transferred their fanatical allegiance

[1] The first meeting of the Indian Communists took place in Tashkent, Oct., 17, 1920.

[2] See: The Minutes of the Meeting of the Indian Communist Party in Tashkent, Jan. 2, 1920.

[3] *The Communist International*, No. 16-17, 1921, p. 122.

from Islam to Communism". Roy said that "some of them approached me with the proposal that they wanted to join the Communist Party. Others enquired why we should not found the Communist Party of India there and then."

It is amazing to read that Roy supposedly tried to convince all those men who were increasingly determined to create a Communist party immediately, that "there was no hurry. They should wait until they returned to India. There was no sense in a few emigrant individuals calling themselves the Communist Party." But, according to Roy, those men were intransigent, and then he began to fear that his continued resistance could "dishearten them". Therefore, Roy concludes, "So I agreed with the proposal of the formation of a Communist Party." [1] It is curious that M. N. Roy did not mention his opponents by name, though he could well have done it, if they had existed.

M. N. Roy's version appears to be quite suitable to Bandyopadhyaya, the historian, who, by playing up the argument about the Muslims' predisposition to Communism, sought to prove that the impact of the October Revolution on India had been insignificant. His line of reasoning turned largely on the assertion that the so-called Communist Party of India had been proclaimed in Tashkent at the demand of the *muhajirins* of the Caliphate exodus movement and consisted of them, too. "These fanatically religious Muslims who went to Tashkent were met by M. N. Roy, joined the 'India House', and the military school, and *founded the Communist Party of India*"... [Italics added —*M. P.*] Thereupon, he declared Abdur Rabb, a Muslim, and Acharya, a Hindu—leaders of the Indian Revolutionary Association—to have been the founders of the Communist Party of India. "These two individuals," he writes, "rather than M. N. Roy, were the real founders of the Communist Party of India..."[2]

These contentions have been accepted by many bourgeois historians who do not share the far-fetched "theory" of ideological community between Islam and Communism. They have accepted it just because they wanted to make their readers believe that the Indian Communist movement had been initiated by casual individuals who had no Marxist convictions whatsoever. John P. Haithcox, for instance,

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[1] *M. N. Roy's Memoirs*, pp. 464-465.
[2] D. Bandyopadhyaya, *Op. cit.*, pp. 130, 139.

writes: "In late 1920 an émigré Communist Party of India was organised in Tashkent. The party was formed from among Indian *muhajirins*, who had participated in a Hijrat, or exodus, from India in protest against the dismemberment of Turkey".[1] This is also the view of David N. Druhe: "...A minority of *muhajirins* who had been converted to Communism in the Tashkent propaganda school advocated the immediate formation of the Communist Party of India...." And he went on: "...Acharya and his follower, the old trader Abdur Rabb, rather than Roy, may be deemed the founders of the Communist Party of India."[2] But, as I said earlier on, P. Acharya had been opposed to the hasty and unprepared proclamation of the CPI, not to speak of Abdur Rabb who had never declared himself a Communist.

The reality was not what M. N. Roy made it out to be in his *Memoirs*, or what some Western and Indian historians said it was. The real state of affairs as far as the formation of the CPI was concerned has been described by the same M. N. Roy in the Report of the Indian Revolutionary Committee in January 1921: "The Communist elements present in Tashkent numbering seven in all, in pursuance of their principles and the plan *previously formed in conjunction with European Communists*, constituted themselves into a duly organised Communist Party of India on October 17, 1920."[3] [Italics added.—*M. P.*] In all probability, the allusion is to the plans for creating the CPI drawn up in cooperation with the British Communists, which could take place only in Moscow and only during or shortly after the Second Congress of the Comintern, in other words, long before Roy met the *muhajirins* in Tashkent.

As you see, the first Indian Communist group, which proclaimed itself to be the Communist Party of India, had no *muhajirins* at all in it, at first. Of the seven men of that group only two had been Muslims before—Mohammed Ali and Mohammed Shafiq Siddiqi, but even they had arrived in Tashkent as representatives of the so-called Provisional Government of India which had existed in Kabul since 1915,

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[1] J. P. Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India. M. N. Roy and Comintern Policy 1920-1939*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1974, p. 20.

[2] David N. Druhe, *Soviet Russia and Indian Communism, 1917-1947*, New York, 1959, p. 39.

[3] ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 488, p. 2.

and had not been involved in the exodus as a Muslim movement. Should the *muhajirins*, as Roy claimed in his *Memoirs*, have insisted on organising a Communist party as quickly as possible—and Muslims should have been known to be particularly disposed towards Socialism—then the original Communist group would, probably, have been much more than seven-strong, because there were over a hundred Indian immigrants in Tashkent alone at the time. Even such foremost *muhajirins* as Shaukat Usmani and Rafiq Ahmad joined the Communist Party only in Moscow in 1921 because they had not been prepared to do so earlier on. Let me note one more thing: neither of them mentioned in their recollections the fact that they and their comrades in Tashkent had insisted on the earliest possible proclamation of the Communist Party of India.

M. N. Roy invariably referred in the official report of the Indian Revolutionary Committee to the Comintern and in other important documents of the day to the political inferiority of the *muhajirins* even from the standpoint of a nationalist revolution and, of course, to their total incapacity for learning the ideas of Communism. "The provisional All-India Revolutionary Committee," it was stated in the report, "considered it futile to try and make internationalists out of the men who have not even the primitive notion of nationalism." [1] With regard to the Muslims' so-called predisposition to Communism, the report was rather specific: "The fact that the Indian Revolutionary Committee has been made up of Communists alone has made these exclusively Muslim elements reluctant to work with people who have been branded by their religion as 'kafirs', unbelievers." [2] The religiousness of most of the Indian revolutionary immigrants in Soviet Turkestan, who still had not even the slightest idea of Marxism, was a factor which, far from facilitating, seriously impeded the immigrants' adoption of Marxism and, in particular, kept them from joining the Indian Communist group in Tashkent.

The view that it was not M. N. Roy but others, Abdur Rabb and Prativadi Acharya, together with the "*muhajirin* section" were the moving spirits behind the formation of the CPI, is widespread. It is erroneously supported even by some Indian Communists who appear to give too much

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[1] ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 488. p. 5.
[2] Ibid., pp. 4-5.

credence to Roy's *Memoirs* and to have too little first-hand information.

The preface to the well-known *Documents of the History of the CPI* says, for instance, that "the initiative to form the CPI in Tashkent in October 1920 did not come from the CPI or from its official representative there, viz. M. N. Roy ... It came from the other Indian revolutionaries there like Acharya and Abdur Rabb and from a section of the *muhajirins*." [1] "M. N. was compelled by necessity to take the initiative in founding the Communist Party of India in Tashkent." [2] Another author, S. V. Ghate, ignoring Acharya and Abdur Rabb, considers that the Tashkent CPI was created by a faceless group of *muhajirins* who had left India to fight for the restoration of the Caliphate under the standards of Kemal Pasha, but, having found themselves in Tashkent, banded together in a Communist Party. After so over-simplifying the course of events, the author concludes: "No wonder Roy was not keen to found the CPI with such elements." Besides, the author presumes, Roy was not personally committed either to creating the CPI because many of the Communists who attended the First and Second Congresses of the Comintern represented either nobody but themselves or some small Communist groups. [3] The author thereby disproves the opinion of Muzaffar Ahmad who insisted on M. N. Roy's personal, career-related interest, so to speak, in the creation of the CPI. [4]

Numerous documents, cited and mentioned in this work, indicate that Roy was the sponsor and organiser of the CPI in Tashkent although the idea to create a Communist party had been expressed in the Indian Section of the Council for International Propaganda before not only the *muhajirins*, but the Indian Revolutionary Association of Abdur Rabb and Acharya arrived in Tashkent.

Now did Roy have an axe to grind as far as the proclamation of the CPI was concerned? If one may put the matter that way at all in this particular case (which is rather doubtful), one can say that Roy was, of course, anxious to represent his country's Communist movement, rather than

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[1] *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, p. 55.
[2] Ibid., p. 57.
[3] S. V. Ghate, "CMP Distorts History about Formation of CP of India", *New Age*, August 30, 1970, p. 4.
[4] Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and the Communist Party of India*, pp. 67-74.

himself, in the Comintern. The main thing, however, is not Roy's personal interest, but his left-sectarian ideas that could and did, as you have just seen, prompt him to press ahead with setting up the Communist Party of India. Let me remind you that even in the "Supplementary Theses" which he had written for the Second Congress of the Comintern, he referred to Communist parties supposedly existing already in Eastern countries. Of course, he wanted to see India, first and foremost, among such countries.

As to Roy's official status as a Comintern representative, there was nothing to limit his personal initiative and responsibility for a while. Although the Comintern did not demand the immediate creation of Communist parties in the East, it did orient the Asian Communists towards promoting the Communist movement in their own countries. The decision, however, on how to pursue this course, when and where, depended on the particular individuals and circumstances they had to operate in. Such are a few considerations in support of the Indian Communist historian, D. Kaushik, who, back in 1966, spoke up, though with inadequate arguments, against the allegation that M. N. Roy had not been involved in initiating the proclamation of the CPI in Tashkent.[1]

Having started full-scale preparations, while still in Moscow, to proclaim a Communist party, Roy stepped them up in Tashkent. It must have been not without reason that many Indians accused him at the time of applying what were sometimes utterly impermissible pressure tactics against immigrants in a bid to build up the membership of the Communist organisation. For instance, by his authority as Chairman of the Indian Revolutionary Committee, he put off the rations a group of Indians on December 3, 1920 for refusing productive employment. It is quite likely that this act was not at all meant to prod Indians into joining the Communist Party, but—in a conflict-haunted immigrant community—it was taken to mean just that. M. Shulman, for instance, wrote about a "mistake made in respect of the immigrants in Tashkent, about forcing Communism on them and dividing them into privileged Communists and offended non-Communists, as they put it." M. Shulman was right to say that the left-sectarian prop-

[1] Devendra Kaushik, "Indian Revolutionaries in Soviet Asia", *Link*, January 26, 1966, p. 76.

aganda of Roy and his group, far from attracting the masses, antagonised them.

Abdur Rabb Barq more than once referred to M. N. Roy's wrong attitude to immigrants. A document of December 5, 1920, signed by the Indian Association, regarding M. N. Roy's attitude to Indians in Tashkent, said unequivocally: "There was no need at all to make most of the Indians sign on as hospital guards or become Communists... We are not against Communism, (and) we do not make a difference between a Communist revolutionary or just a revolutionary. All we object to is forcible conversion (to Communism). We have respect for convictions and object to the use of force. Comrade Roy cut off supplies to the Indian Revolutionary Association and immigrants from 3rd instant." [1]

Now let us turn to Roy himself and to his "Statement on Communism" which he made before a "General Meeting of Indian Revolutionaries and Immigrants" in Tashkent. That was a few days after the formation of the CPI was announced, in October 1920, and the character of Roy's statement clearly reflected the emotion, controversy and dissension among the Indians over the proclamation of the so-called Communist Party of India. M. N. Roy said, notably: "In view of the fact that the terms Communist and Communism are giving origin to a great deal of misunderstanding and to some extent, harmful dissension among the Indian revolutionaries here, we thought it necessary to make a clear statement about the attitude, plan and policy of us who believe that it is only through the conscious action of the pauperised masses that real liberty can come to India... We work for the social and economic emancipation of the masses, political independence is but a stepping stone... Therefore we are confident, when both of us will go before the masses with our respective programmes, they will be with us. So, Comrades, you can rest assured that it is not necessary for us Communists to seek for converts. Of course, we are doing, and will always do propaganda to put forth the Communist principles before the Indian masses and the young intellectual revolutionaries. But we don't impose our principles on anybody. The people who tell you that we are trying to make Communists of you forcibly, are nothing but fools and mischief-makers."

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[1] CPA IML.

It appears that if Roy should, indeed, have been attacked by the *muhajirins* who wanted him to get down to setting up the CPI immediately, as he maintains in his memoirs, the accent in his speech should have been different. He would, probably, have spoken then about a great number of those who wanted to join the Party and said that admission had to be limited for the time being, because far from all had achieved the level of understanding that was required to make a Communist, and so on and so forth. The notes in Roy's speech were quite different—reassure yourselves, don't believe the mischief-makers, we are not going at all to make you join the Party. Many Indians at the time, consequently, were uneasy not because they saw themselves barred from the Party but, on the contrary, because they might be called on to join it.

It will not be beside the point in this context to quote a communication from A. M. Tarakanov, the Commissar of the Indian Military School in Tashkent. In reporting in December 1920 to the Political Department of the Tashkent Board of Military Educational Institutions about the difficulties of working with Indian students, he pointed out that "very few of them are Communists, and many are very religious. If you talk to him [an Indian] about Communism, he will hardly listen to you..." So the author called for upgrading the political training of Indians. [1]

The tension between the Revolutionary Committee and the Association ran high. Relations between them were discussed at a joint meeting of the Turkestan Bureau of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party and the Executive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Turkestan on December 31, 1920. The minutes recorded that the conflict "occurred ... on the ground of differences over the methods of work among Indian immigrants".

It was at that meeting that P. Acharya accused Roy of having coerced immigrants to join the Party organisation. He said: "Indians must be told that they will be taught Communism here, but not forcibly recruited in the Party." He went on to argue that M. N. Roy "must be dismissed from his job ... in the Indian Revolutionary Committee because he has lost his prestige among the Indians." [2]

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[1] SACSA, s. 25025, r. 1, f. 11, p. 3.
[2] Party Archives of the Uzbek Republic, s. 60, r. 1, f. 194, p. 4.

Attempts to reconcile the feuding factions failed, and it was recommended that the "members of the Revolutionary Committee ... should leave for Moscow as soon as possible to resolve these issues" ... with the Comintern.[1] Early in January 1921 Roy, and then Acharya and Abdur Rabb Barq left for Moscow.

The Small Bureau of the Comintern spent several months studying the Indian affairs. A special ECCI Commission of Karl Steinhardt, Konstantin Zetkin and Ya. Kh. Peters, of the Turkestan Bureau of the Comintern, was sent to Tashkent in March 1921, for an on-the-spot inquiry. The Commission reported back to Moscow on March 14. It stated that it was differences of principle and those of personal relations that were at the root of the conflict. Speaking of the essential differences, it said that the group of Abdur Rabb Barq had accused Roy of an "erroneous policy of Communist propaganda which is pointless at the present time". In Abdur Rabb Barq's opinion, "nationalism had to be used, too, in considerable measure".

The Commission was in a rather pronounced left-revolutionary mood and, evidently for that reason, had arrived at the unwarranted conclusion that "the programme of the Mukherji-Roy group corresponded exactly to the Directives of the Second Congress".[2] The Small Bureau of the Comintern held special sessions with Indians in March and April 1921, in an effort to reconcile the contending parties. It suggested a compromise arrangement—setting up a joint committee of Indian Communists and non-Communists with two RCP(B) members in it. Abdur Rabb Barq was prepared to sit on such a committee, but Roy struck an intransigent posture, refusing all cooperation with the Association. Mukherji energetically supported him with his messages from Tashkent. In one of them, of April 13, 1921, he wrote: "We all agree with you. No compromise with Abdur Rabb and Acharya."

In the prevailing situation, the Comintern took what was a wise decision, indeed. The idea behind it was to help Indian revolutionaries learn Marxist-Leninist theory so as to switch them from futile pursuit of an immediate Socialist revolution to a strategy of long and fundamental

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[1] Ibid.

[2] See: Message of March 14, 1921 from the Turkestan Bureau of the Comintern to the Small Bureau of ECCI.

preparations for it. That was, at the same time, a real way to shaping the Communist Party of India, a true party of the Indian working class.

In April 1921, the Small Bureau resolved to stop work with Indian immigrants in Turkestan and transfer all Indians to Moscow [1] to be admitted to the just-established Communist University of The Toilers of the East. [2]

Moscow with its turbulent political life was in itself an invaluable school for the revolutionary education of Indians. At a time when, under pressure from Britain, the Afghan government took up a hostile stance towards the Indian revolutionaries and obstructed their movement into Soviet Turkestan, there was no point in working on with them in a city where appropriate staff and material resources were not enough for it. Moscow with plenty of educational facilities and teaching staffs could offer far better conditions for the ideological and theoretical training of Eastern revolutionaries. So the decision of the Small Bureau of the Comintern met the desire of the Indians themselves perfectly well. In a letter of September 12, 1921 to the ECCI Secretary, M. N. Roy explained the reason for that turn in the Indians' lot as follows: "...it was resolved to remove our Communist Group with several others to Moscow to enter the Communist University and complete their political training, which they had already been receiving for several months. This resolution was taken partly on account of the desire of the University to have Indian students, and partly on account of our intention to train a number of agitators and propagandists capable of beginning the organisation of the Communist Party of India."

In the letter just quoted, M. N. Roy referred to the real state of things. Nevertheless, a few decades later, in his memoirs, he joined the chorus of bourgeois and revisionist historians who explained the decision to transfer work with

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[1] See: M. N. Roy's letter of September 12, 1921 to the ECCI Secretary.

[2] The Organising Bureau of the RCP Central Committee resolved on February 9, 1921 to rename the courses at the People's Commissariat for Nationalities a University of the Toilers of the East (CPA IML, s. 583, r. I, f. 25, p. 66); Decree of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee organising the University was passed on April 21, 1921 (See: *Cultural Life in the USSR in 1917-1927. Chronicle*, Moscow, 1975, p. 269 (in Russian).

Indians to Moscow as the Soviet government's retreat under pressure from British diplomacy. [1]

One simple way to measure the "objectivity" of such an explanation is by comparing M. N. Roy's two positions on the matter in question. It remains for me to add: first, the above-mentioned decision, although it had, of course, been taken in agreement with the Government of the RSFSR, was actually adopted by the Comintern, not by the Council of People's Commissars and, second, one cannot speak of a "retreat" since the very work which had provoked the fear and protests of the British colonialists, far from coming to an end, was carried on in circumstances that promised a far greater effect.

It took too long for the decision of the Small Bureau of the Comintern to be fulfilled. Indians were coming to Moscow in stages. Twenty-three of them assembled in the Soviet capital in August. [2] By October 1, 1921 there were eighteen Indians, mostly Communists, studying at the University. [3]

That was the starting point of a new phase in the life of the bulk of Indian revolutionary émigrés in Soviet Russia. They worked hard to learn the subjects that were to make them educated revolutionaries. It was here, in Moscow, that the number of Indian Communists went up faster than ever before. According to M. N. Roy, there was a compact group of 30 Indian Communists established in Moscow by September 1, 1921. [4] A certain proportion of national revolutionaries, who had become disillusioned in conspiratorial activities and in the Gandhian methods of passive resistance, were coming round to Communism, anxious to find it to contain a scientific clue to resolving India's national and social problems.

News of the creation of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East reached India fairly quickly and made many of its nationalist revolutionaries eager to study in

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[1] See: *M. N. Roy's Memoirs*, p. 468; Arun C. Bose, "The Indian Revolutionaries and the Bolsheviks—Their Early Contacts, 1918-1922", *Asian Studies*, Vol. VIII, 1970, No. 3, p. 345; David N. Druhe, *Soviet Russia and Indian Communism, 1917-1947*, p. 49-50; John P. Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India. M. N. Roy and Comintern Policy. 1920-1939*, p. 23.

[2] See: M. N. Roy's letter of September 12, 1921 to the ECCI Secretary.

[3] *Zhizn natsionalnostei*, November 23, 1921, p. 4.

[4] See: M. N. Roy's letter of September 1, 1921 to the ECCI.

Moscow. One Indian Communist we could never identify, who had left the Soviet capital in August 1921 and reached Bombay on December 15, wrote to the secretary of the Indian Communist Party to tell him about his nearly seven months' travels throughout the land (until June 2, 1922). He said he had passed through ten industrial centres of India and met many who wanted to go to Moscow to learn the art of revolution. Of that number, "some 50 young students (were) ready to pay their way to Moscow (across Iranian territory), if there was a chance for them to enrol at the Communist University".

The Ghadar Party leadership, too, showed an eagerness to study Socialist theory and see how it worked in Soviet Russia. Sohan Singh, the then Party leader, wrote subsequently, already a Communist, that the Party realised the significance of the Soviet Revolution and decided that it was necessary to send some comrades of responsibility to the Soviet Union as the first step in order to get an understanding of Socialist theories propounded by Marx and Lenin. Sohan Singh reported that, having contacted the Comintern, Ghadar sent young men to Russia from America and Canada for revolutionary training. [1]

We know the names of two members of the Ghadar Party who came from the US—Rathan Singh and Santokh Singh, both workers, who arrived in Moscow in 1922 in order, as they stated in their questionnaires, to obtain the necessary knowledge and go back to India to do revolutionary work. [2] Both attended the Fourth Congress of the Comintern.

Members of the Provisional Government of India, who had not been to Soviet Russia before, also arrived in Moscow. One of them was Rahmat Ali Zakaria who arrived early in 1921 "to study the general political situation", as was stated in his identity card. Representatives of other nationalist revolutionary organisations of India also stopped over in Moscow.

The Communist University of the Toilers of the East played a paramount role in the political education of the Indian émigrés. Most of the Indians who had come from Turkestan also studied at it. It was they who actually shaped the function of that educational establishment in

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[1] Quoted from: A. V. Raikov, "Indian National Revolutionaries and Marxism (the 1920s-1930s)", *Voprosy Istorii*, No. 2, 1972, p. 76.

[2] CPA IML, s. 491, r. I, f. 369, pp. 40, 47.

the complex process of development of Communist outlook.

The first group of eight Indians who had completed their course of study at the Communist University [1] sent messages of gratitude to the ECCI and the RCP(B) on November 20, 1921. In their first letter, to the Comintern, they said: "We, the Indian Section of the Communist University for Eastern Peoples, on the completion of our course of study of Social Sciences, send our greetings to the Executive Committee of the Communist International, and ... we wish to express our loyalty to the Communist ideas which we have received through our contact with the Communist International, the first revolutionary organ of the world proletariat to extend the hand of comradeship to the oppressed peoples of the East."

In their second message, the Indians expressed their gratitude to the RCP(B) "for the welcome we have received in Russia and the opportunities for study and improvement that have been given to us here". They said they trusted that with "the inspiration ... received from the Russian Revolution" they would play their full part "in the revolution that is coming in India". It was in the process of study and contact with the Soviet people in Moscow that Shaukat Usmani, Rafiq Ahmad, Muzaffar Ahmad, Rahmat Ali Zakaria, to mention just a few, [2] who subsequently played a significant part in creating the Communist Party in India, had become Communists.

So it was not so much in Tashkent as in Moscow that the Indian group of Communists shaped up. In any case, it was largely in Moscow that it developed its ideological stability and grew numerically. The process of formation of the first Communist group in the history of India and its actual activities inside India (spoken and printed propaganda of Marxism, contact with national revolutionaries and the first Communists who had appeared in that country as early as 1921, practical help they lent them in organising and strengthening Communist groups) gave rise to the Indian Communist movement. Little by little, the Tash-

[1] This group must have consisted of Indians who had studied in Tashkent and therefore succeeded in graduating from the University earlier than other students. It was not until March 25, 1922 that the University had its first official graduation festival. (See: *Cultural Life in the USSR 1917-1927. Chronicle*, p. 337 (in Russian).

[2] See: *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, p. 229.

kent- and later Moscow-based CPI developed into a foreign-based Communist centre which, under Comintern leadership, fulfilled an important function in laying the ground for a real Communist Party of India. [1] Therein lay the great historic significance of the activities of the pioneer Indian Communists in Soviet Russia.

There has been hectic controversy among Indian Communist intellectuals in recent years over what event in the Communist movement in India should be considered to have been the CPI's point of origin. Properly speaking, it was back in 1959 that all uncertainty about the issue was removed. Until then, different dates of the Party's founding—1925, 1933, and 1936—had been mentioned. But on August 18, 1959 the CPI Secretariat, after a careful review of the Party's history, came to the conclusion that it was the first all-India Communist conference at Kanpur on December 26, 1925, which was attended by over five hundred delegates, that established the CPI. [2] It elected the Central Committee and adopted the Party's Constitution. Soon after the conference, the Constitution was amended to identify the relationship between the Party and its foreign centre, based in Western Europe at the time, which had apparently contributed to convening the Kanpur conference itself. [3] However, one of the organisers of the Communist Party of India, Muzaffar Ahmad is not inclined to consider the Kanpur conference as the constituent one. In his papers on the Indian Communist movement, he maintains that the CPI "was founded on October 17, 1920 in the city of Tashkent" and that "when the history of the Communist Party is written in the future, the compilers will have to start from this point" since, "first things should come first". [4]

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[1] This point of view was, in effect, expressed by G. Adhikari. (See: G. Adhikari, *Lenin on Roy's Supplementary Colonial Theses*, pp. 2-3).

[2] See: S. V. Ghate, "CMP Distorts History about Formation of CP of India", *New Age*, August 30, 1970. A. M. Melnikov and L. V. Mitrokhin, "The First Indian Communist Conference and the Formation of the Communist Party of India", *Voprosy Istorii*, 1973, No. 3.

[3] See: G. Adhikari, "General Introduction to Documents of 1917-1920", *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, pp. 2-3.

[4] Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and the Communist Party of India, 1920-1922*, p. 28 and *The Communist Party of India and Its Formation Abroad*, pp. 5, 33.

Indeed, first things should come first, and it is for this very reason that the activities of M. N. Roy and his comrades in Moscow during and after the Second Congress of the Comintern and subsequently in Tashkent and in Moscow again were the beginnings of the Indian Communist movement which found its expression, notably, in the constitution of the first Communist group known as Communist Party. But there is no reason to consider the group established in Tashkent and Moscow as a Communist party and to deny this name to other groups which shaped up in India proper in 1921-1922. Why do otherwise? Just because Roy's group was the first in the field? That is an extremely important point, beyond dispute. The Roy group must be considered to have been the first. But one cannot see it as anything but a small group and as a party on that account.

An Indian Commission under the chairmanship of a Dutch Communist, S. J. Rutgers, formed by the Small Bureau of the Comintern on June 13, 1921, produced the following assessment of M. N. Roy's group (June 26): "As they also consider international Party discipline as essential to the revolutionary movement they may be considered as the beginning of a real Communist Party, although the smallness of the group and the fact that it possesses not yet roots in India itself gives it a provisional character." [1]

That is to say it was not a party but a group that laid the beginnings of the prospective party or, which is the same, laid the beginnings of the Indian Communist movement.

One cannot help noting, on the other hand, that the Commission recommended to the Comintern to recognise that group as a party but grant it nothing but a consultative vote at the Third Congress of the Communist International, which had just opened (probably, because it had no roots in India). That is apparently just what was done because the "List of Delegates" to the Third Congress stated: "India—Communist Party", [2] as distinct from the earlier "List of Invited Groups" which referred only to Indian "Communist groups". [3]

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[1] See: Indian Commission to the Small Bureau of the Comintern.

[2] *The Third World Congress of the Communist International.* Verbatim Report, Petrograd, Gosizdat Publishers, 1922, p. 496.

[3] Ibid., pp. 8-9; *The Communist International*, No. 16-17, 1921, p. 122.

Yet, neither does this element change anything about the substance of our assessment of the Indian Communists who organised themselves in Tashkent and Moscow as the first Communist group which tried to create a Communist party in exile and by that act alone had laid the ground for the Indian Communist movement.

T. F. Devyatkina does not agree with that conclusion although she does admit that the Tashkent group "has played a certain part in creating the Communist Party of India by the very fact of proclaiming the Communist party and by its propaganda activities".[1] It is difficult to argue with T. F. Devyatkina since she avoids, in fact, giving an assessment of the actual significance and role of the Tashkent group by referring to "a certain part" which shows her judgement to be quite indefinite. The arguments she produced in support of her statement about "a certain part" and against our conclusion boil down to the following:

1. The Communist groups created in India proper a year or two later than that of Tashkent (T. F. Devyatkina writes: "perhaps, a little later") "served as organic elements of the CPI", whereas the group formed in Soviet Russia "soon ceased to function, and its individual members acted as Communists in other associations or personally and remained immigrants, save a few exceptions".[2]

2. "M. N. Roy's group is not the first émigré organisation to have declared itself Communist", for "a Committee of Indian Communists, about which there is very little information, was set up in Berlin early in 1920".[3]

For the first argument. Unfortunately, T. F. Devyatkina failed to point out that some of the Indian Communist groups at home which had subsequently become "organic elements of the CPI" were created with full-scale participation, or, sometimes even upon the initiative of individual members of the Tashkent group who had been expressly sent to India to that end. Now, the very reason why the Tashkent group had "ceased to function" was because most of its members had been sent to India to prepare the Communist party and to Western Europe to establish a foreign centre which is known to have subsequently played an

[1] T. F. Devyatkina, M. N. Yegorova, A. M. Melnikov, *The Origin of the Communist Movement in India...* p. 79.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.

essential role in launching the Communist movement in India.

For the second argument. It holds no water for the simple reason that "there is very little information" about the Berlin group of Communists and none at all about its activities inside India. Besides, it is the Tashkent group that was the first to establish itself organisationally and politically and it was that group, rather than any other, that was admitted to the Comintern as a Communist party. In consequence, the pioneering role of the Tashkent group in starting the Communist movement in India appears to be perfectly obvious.

The fact that the first organised Indian Communist group sprang up in Soviet Russia would seem to bear out the claim of bourgeois historians that the Indian Communist movement had been "nurtured abroad and transplanted into the Indian soil", and that it was, consequently, a result of the "activities of ... agents of Moscow" [1] because inside India "there was no ground for combatant revolutionary organisations of the working class to arise". [2]

Druhe asserts that the Communist movement in India had emerged because of the activities of the "Red agents". "'Red' agents", he writes, "were, after all, merely 'creatures of circumstance' whose conversion to Communism had been a purely fortuitous event." [3] Haithcox also puts down the origin of Indian Communism to the work of Comintern agents and money from Moscow. He goes even further, trying to persuade his readers that the only reason why the Communists had put forward their demand of national independence for India was in order all the easier to "indoctrinate", "recruit" and "convert" individual nationalist revolutionaries. [4] Indian bourgeois historian Zafar Imam, elaborating on the same argument, maintains, as a matter of fact, that it was not the Indians themselves but Soviet leaders who had decided on setting up a Communist party

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[1] *Indian Communist Party Documents (1930-1956)*, with an introduction by V. B. Karnik, The Institute of Pacific Relations, Bombay, 1957, pp. VII-VIII.

[2] See, for example: Pelling Henry, *The British Communist Party. A Historical Profile*, Block, London, 1958, pp. 41-42.

[3] David N. Druhe, *Soviet Russia and Indian Communism. 1917-1947*, p. 53.

[4] John P. Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India. M. N. Roy and Comintern Policy, 1920-1939*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1974.

in India. Once they felt they wanted a solid foothold inside India, they set about working to create Communist groups in that country. [1] Overstreet and Windmiller, in spite of their serious approach in the many pages of their study, have, nevertheless, been unscientific in denying that the Indian Communist movement had any national ground of its own. They attribute its origin to the decisive role of the money and the political support of the Comintern and Moscow which pursued their own objectives. "And it is probable," they write, "that, like many other Indians at the time, he [Roy—*Tr.*] was drawn to the Communist International not because of ideological convictions but rather because it provided political and financial support for his struggle against imperialism in India." [2] However, all these contentions were possible because their authors were afflicted with an anti-Communist bias which made them blind to the real facts of history. Now, the facts are that it was the imperialists themselves who, by their colonialist policies, contributed towards creating fertile ground in Oriental countries for the fast germination of the seeds of Communism and for a more rapid turn of nationalist revolutionaries to the Bolsheviks.

The *Setarei Iran* newspaper referred to it back in December 1921. Its commentary had been provoked by a British note to the Government of the RSFSR charging the Soviet Minister in Iran, F. A. Rothstein, with having spent much money to organise Bolshevik propaganda in that country. "British leaders," the paper said, "as enlightened people, cannot have any claim to present to the Russian government, for they must know by whose policies in the Orient Russian propaganda is occasioned. If Turkey were happy, would it be possible to conduct any Socialist propaganda over there? If everything were all right in India, could the Russian Consuls have any influence on that society? It is not by Russian Consuls but by England's aggressive policies that resentment in the Orient against the British government has been caused... We are sure that but for all that, neither Turkey, nor Afghanistan would have to face such an issue even 100 years from now. There is noth-

[1] Zafar Imam, *Colonialism in East-West Relations. A Study of Soviet Policy Towards India and Anglo-Soviet Relations. 1917-1947*, Eastman Publications, New Delhi, 1969, p. 153.

[2] Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India*, p. 36.

ing but the imperialist policies of the English in the Orient to account for their rapprochement with Bolshevism, if there is any..." [1]

One more thing the facts indicate is that the organisers of the first Indian Communist group—M. N. Roy, A. Mukherji, and P. Acharya, former nationalist revolutionaries—arrived in Soviet Russia considering themselves Communists already, and the initiative in proclaiming the Communist Party of India belonged to them, and not to the Bolsheviks and to Lenin who, on the contrary, had urged restraint and a stage-by-stage approach to the matter. M. N. Roy himself referred, in September 1925, to Lenin's restraining position which he ignored by acting the way he did in 1920 and which he understood and appreciated only much later. In his Report on Party Work in India in 1925 he related: "We had advisedly refrained from creating a Communist party right until late 1923. That was premature... The ground had not yet been prepared, the intellectual vanguard was insufficient, the proletariat remained much too backward, there was no point in creating an illusion of a Communist party with a handful of members that had no idea of Communism. We guided ourselves by Lenin's warning about the danger of painting various liberation movements in Oriental countries in the colours of Communism." [2]

Besides, scores of Indian national revolutionaries, representing the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois intellectuals of India, arrived in Soviet Russia. Nobody forced them to come to make Communists of them. They did so at their own free will.

So where was the ground that produced the irresistible urge of many Indian revolutionaries to go to Soviet Russia and of some of them, to accept Communism? That was the national ground of India, the exigencies of her anti-imperialist revolutionary struggle for independence. It is indicative that very many, perhaps, even most of the first Communists of India emerged from the ranks of national

[1] See: "Persia. Economic and Political Abstract", *ECCI Bulletin*, January 1, 1922, No. 1 (ORCSA, s. 5402, r. I, f. 522, pp. 151-152 (in Russian).

[2] CPA IML. Significantly enough, M. N. Roy makes no mention of the proclamation of the CPI in Tashkent as if there had been none at all. It must be because he felt that what had been formed there was not a party but a foreign-based Communist group with the mission to create a real party in India proper.

revolutionaries. The best representatives of India's nationalist revolutionary petty-bourgeois democracy came to realise—after years of fruitless work in various conspiratorial organisations—that nationalism alone was insufficient for resolving the problems of national liberation. The October Revolution made them see the great force of Marxism-Leninism and it was only natural for them to feel attracted by it and, consequently, by Soviet Russia. They had spent too much of their time in Western Europe with nothing, as a matter of fact, to show for it. Only in Soviet Russia could they get real support because what united them with the Soviet government was a community of anti-imperialist interests and, of course, only in Soviet Russia could they best of all study the experience of the revolutionary struggle of the Russian proletariat which they, apparently, needed, first and foremost.

It was a little later than in Soviet Russia that Communist groups began to be formed in India proper, in 1921-1922, in spite of persecution by the British authorities. Some people, also former nationalist revolutionaries, INC left-wingers or trade union militants appeared in four cities—Calcutta, Bombay, Lahore, and Madras—who "...apart from one another..." "...ventured upon the task of building an all-India Party." [1]

So what was the argument behind the claim that there had been no ground in India for Communist groups to arise? Wasn't it that the British authorities had done their best to destroy that ground by mercilessly suppressing the slightest Communist sentiment, let alone action? But the anti-Communist policy of repression could not but confirm the existence of a natural historical environment for the emergence of a Communist movement in India.

However, the process of mastering Marxist theory was long and complex, especially for the Indian nationalist revolutionaries because they could not easily discard their earlier petty-bourgeois revolutionary concepts. The attempts of the first Indian Communists to create a Communist party abroad immediately, back in 1920-1921, were due just to their immature knowledge of Marxism and failed on that account. India still had not all of the social and economic and political conditions that were indispensable

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[1] Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and Communist Party of India, 1920-1922*, National Book Agency Private Ltd, Calcutta, 1970, p. 78.

for it. Neither could such conditions have been created in a foreign land, within an immigrant revolutionary community because that community was part of Indian society.

It was not until December 1925 that the Communist Party of India was eventually proclaimed in Kanpur, following the merger of home-based and émigré Communist elements inside the country. Yet even after that, it took years for that difficult process of its creation and building to be over. That happened after the necessary conditions had emerged and Marxist Socialism began to fuse with the Indian working-class movement. So what was there to regard as artificial about that long process of formation of the Indian Communist Party out of isolated Communist groups that had first appeared in Soviet Russia? Where was the "hand of Moscow" in it?

Incidentally, there was the "hand of Moscow", indeed, but only as an expression of the objective influence of the October Revolution on the colonial world, supplemented by the natural subjective action of Russian Communists who were anxious to pass on their knowledge and their revolutionary experience to whoever wanted to learn them.

What determines the value of the Indian Communist group which had shaped up in Soviet Russia was not only that it was the first one, but the whole record of its activities. With Soviet aid, the Indian Communists did great and important political work. And although that work was deficient because of left-sectarian trends that afflicted it, it did, nevertheless, help towards the political awakening of the Indians by demolishing their traditional, religion- and caste-inspired notions of society, and implanting new concepts of classes, class struggle, proletarian solidarity, the Soviet system of government and Socialism.

Among the Indian revolutionaries, the Communists were the first to speak out against the traditional mistrust which their country's working people had, for obvious reasons, not only of the British bourgeoisie but of the British proletariat as well. That prejudice underlay the Indian national revolutionaries' still surviving view of India as one nation of exploited proletarians and of Great Britain as a nation of exploiters. Lenin wrote that the distrust of the oppressed in the oppressor nation as a whole had been a national prejudice, one of the hardest to die, and that without overcoming it there could have been no voluntary alliance of the

proletarians of all lands, nor any alliance of the national liberation movement with the revolutionary struggle of the international working class. [1]

It was by setting out to establish a militant alliance with the vanguard of the British proletarians that the Indian Communists started their practical work. Indian and English Communists—delegates to the Second Congress of the Comintern—sat down as comrades in Moscow as early as August 12, 1920 to draft a programme for their common struggle against British imperialism. [2] That programme essentially consisted of the proposals put forward by the Indian Communists in their letter of August 9 to the British Communist Party.

Indian Communists did some important work in Tashkent as well. Instead of the abortive three-week courses of history, economics, the working-class movement and Socialism, the Indian Communists began to organise weekly meetings of immigrants to give talks and deliver lectures for them on current topics, particularly, on the events in India, on the sense and importance of the Russian Revolution and on revolutionary developments around the world. The Revolutionary Committee's Report said: "An encouraging fruit of these efforts is found in the awakening interest of the students in political discussion, ... and it is gratifying to find a steadily-growing tendency towards political rather than religious ideology in their outlook." [3] A two-week debate on the draft programme for the Indian revolution aroused the Indians' considerable interest. I had already referred to that document and pointed out that under the prevailing conditions it could not have become a base on which to build a united front of all the anti-imperialist forces of India. At the same time, many of the social-economic demands of the draft programme, particularly those of abolishing feudal exploitation, could not fail to impress the Indians who, perhaps, were just coming round to grasping the interdependence of the problems of national and social liberation.

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[1] See: V. I. Lenin, "Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1974, p. 150.

[2] Practical Measures for Coordinating the Indian Revolutionary Movement with the Proletarian Revolution in England.

[3] ORCSA, s. 5402, r. I, f. 488, pp. 2-3.

Tashkent schools and various courses played a certain role in the political education of the Indian revolutionaries. Several immigrants went to primary school to learn to read and write in Russian, 15 attended the Tashkent Party School for Muslims, and some Indians were among the students of the Turkestan Trade Union School. [1]

A fairly large amount of work was carried on to produce propaganda material for India. It was expanded particularly after the Turkestan Bureau of the Comintern was established in Tashkent on October 20, 1920. A *Manifesto of the Turkestan Bureau of the Comintern* (circulation 10,000), K. Marx's Preface to the *Communist Manifesto* (4,000), *Draft Theses* [apparently by M. N. Roy] *on the Eastern Question for the Third Congress of the Comintern* (250,000) were published in Urdu and English in the space of six weeks (from early May to June 16, 1921). An appeal to Indian youth, one to Indian soldiers in Iran and some other items were prepared for publication in Urdu and English during the same period of time. [2]

It was not only literature but propagandists as well that Indian Communists sent back to India. They did propaganda among the British occupation forces in Iran. The Revolutionary Committee's Report pointed out that out of a hundred immigrants that were in Tashkent at the very end of 1920, eighteen went back to India and to its border areas for revolutionary work among independent tribes, and five went to Iran (three to Resht and two to Meshhed) for propaganda among British Indian troops. [3]

Once in Moscow, a great number of Indians enrolled at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East. However, the early Indian Communists did not confine themselves to studying the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism and the Soviet people's effort in building a Socialist society. They took the knowledge they had acquired in Soviet Russia back with them when they returned home to spread it, above all, among the nationalist revolutionary intellectuals as most of them had themselves been shortly before, and to form new Communist groups.

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[1] ORCSA, s. 5402, r. I, f. 488, pp. 2-3.

[2] See: Report on the Work of the Turkestan Bureau of the Comintern from May to mid-June, 1921.

[3] ORCSA, s. 5402, r. I, f. 488, pp. 3, 5.

Roy did a considerable amount of ideological and political work to prepare the conditions for the constitution of the Indian Communist Party, although his left-sectarian views interfered with that work.

Using the links he still had with national revolutionaries, M. N. Roy carried on much fruitful critical work, in his personal correspondence with them and in his printed statements, to show up the inconsistency and harm done by their tactics of individual terrorism, plotting, ignoring the mass of the people. In that way he did a good deal to bring a large number of nationalist revolutionaries over to Marxism. [1] His repeated imperative appeals to the Indian National Congress to show concern for the immediate interests of the working masses were instrumental in radicalising the left wing of the INC.

In 1921, M. N. Roy, with the Comintern's permission, sent three "ministers of Communism"—Mohammed Ali, Mohammed Shafiq and Nalini Gupta—to India or close to her borders. Mohammed Ali arrived in Kabul in the spring of 1921 to do a wide range of organising and propaganda for North India. He came in touch with immigrant Indian national revolutionaries, trying to win them over to Communism. According to him that was an interesting part of his work because those individuals did not have any more or less definite idea of the Russian Revolution and of effective application of its ideas in other countries. [2]

With the help of his old and new friends in Kabul, and with F. F. Raskolnikov's cooperation, Mohammed Ali passed Marxist literature over into India, arranged for articles about Soviet Russia to be published in INC papers in North India, and got a message from Roy and Mukherji across, if belatedly, to the Ahmedabad Session of the Congress.

Mohammed Ali's activities were quite productive. He succeeded, for example, in getting the consent of a group of prominent national revolutionaries in exile, though they would not accept Communism, "to render full moral support to our cause". [3] That was to help the Communists in achieving their main goal of setting up an all-India Communist Party. Moreover, Mohammed Ali succeeded in im-

[1] For details, see: A. V. Raikov, *National Revolutionary Organisations of India in the Battle for Freedom*, pp. 202-213. (in Russian).
[2] See: T. F. Devyatkina, M. N. Yegorova, A. M. Melnikov, *The Origin of the Communist Movement in India,...* p. 156.
[3] Ibid.

pressing the ideas of Communism on a great Sikh, one of the leaders of the anti-imperialist Akali movement, INC member Mota Singh. He had gone to Afghanistan to escape persecution by British authorities. Mota Singh declared his desire to become a Communist, and Mohammed Ali "acknowledged him as a Party member". Mohammed Ali maintained stable contact with Mota Singh after he had come back to Punjab and begun to put together the first Communist group in North-West India, so as to get down to creating the Communist party "in all India", [1] as he officially announced in papers. That happened most likely at Jalandhar in the autumn of 1921.

However, in mid-1922, Mota Singh was arrested, but that did not mean any stop in the efforts to form Communist groups in North-West India. In January 1922, Mohammed Ali had Mohammed Shafiq, Secretary of the Tashkent Communist group, join him in his work in Kabul. [2] A new Communist group was set up with their help and began to operate at Lahore with Ghulam Hussain as leader.

The activities of both Communists of the Tashkent group in Kabul showed them to have dropped some of their left-sectarian intransigence. They established and maintained contact in every way with the leaders of the left wing of the INC. Moreover, both of them, as well as Abdul Haq, also back from Tashkent, joined the All-India Congress Committee which was formed in Kabul in the summer of 1921 as a provincial INC and existed for a year. [3] That was already a demonstration of their recognition of the need for Communists to cooperate with the INC which they would not accept shortly before that.

M. N. Yegorova has gathered some interesting information about an appeal which must have been addressed to the INC in the spring of 1922 by Mohammed Shafiq, on behalf of the CPI, and signed by both Communists. [4] That document, to judge from its authors' letters to Roy, along with restating common leftist postulates playing down the essence

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[1] Ibid., pp. 162-163.

[2] He left Moscow in the autumn of 1921 on his way across Europe. His main destination was India but he did not stay long over there. He managed to visit Bombay and Lahore and, to escape persecution by British police, he went to Kabul.

[3] See: T. F. Devyatkina, M. N. Yegorova, A. M. Melnikov, *The Origin of the Communist Movement in India...*, pp. 155-156.

[4] Ibid., pp. 159-161, 237.

and value of the struggle for *swaraj* and underestimating the role of the national bourgeoisie in that struggle, paid tribute to Mahatma Gandhi as the greatest national leader of the Indian masses. The appeal to the Congress once more called on it to include the economic demands of the working people of town and countryside in its programme.

There was, however, some disbelief at the same time in the INC's ability to fulfil this recommendation since the appeal suggested creating an independent mass party of working people which would fight not only for national liberation but for an improved condition of the workers and peasants as well. As you see, Mohammed Ali and Mohammed Shafiq no longer believed that the INC should be abolished, nor did they proclaim a clear line to seek cooperation with it although they were themselves rather active in contacting its left leaders. They would not explain, for example, what they meant by creating a mass party of the working people—within the Congress or outside? And what relations was that party to maintain with it? In other words, they had not yet realised full well what course they were to pursue to build a united anti-imperialist front in India.

Although this appeal was never published, it still found its way into the hands of ranking Congress leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi, and was discussed by them. It was a document of positive value since it again announced the existence of a Communist movement in India and showed it to be active in attacking Indian society's major political problems.

Nalini Gupta discharged an important function in India. Having left Moscow in August 1921, he arrived in Calcutta late in December and stayed on in India for over two months.[1] He succeeded in gathering copious information about the incipient Communist movement in India and helping establish links between its individual groups which existed in isolation from each other at the time, and also between them, the Comintern and M. N. Roy's foreign centre. In M. N. Yegorova's opinion, it was Nalini Gupta most probably that was the first to present to the Comintern the

[1] From India, Nalini Gupta set out on a rather winding way to Europe. In late March, 1922 he reached Berlin to find the European Information Bureau of Indian Communists with M. N. Roy at their head—a virtual foreign-based headquarters of the Communist movement of India—operating there already.

Bombay Socialist Group, the Calcutta Communist Group of Muzaffar Ahmad, and the Madras Communist Group of Singaravelu Chettiar. [1]

It was not only Mohammed Ali, Mohammed Shafiq and Nalini Gupta that carried on Communist work in India. Early in 1922 thirteen young Indians, mostly Communists, having been through an abridged course of instruction at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East and having armed themselves with the Leninist theory of struggle for national liberation, hurried home to tell their people about the Socialist Revolution in Russia, share in fighting for their country's national independence and undertake a wide range of activities to lay the ground for setting up the Communist Party of India. Revolutionaries Mir Abdul Majid, Firozuddin Mansur, Rafiq Ahmad, Habib Ahmad, Akbar Shah, Sultan Mohammed (or else Abdul Hamid), Abdul Qadir Sehrai, Gawhar Rahman, Sayed and Nismuddin set off, by separate groups, on a hard and long journey home across the Pamirs. [2]

Muhammad Akbar Khan returned to his North-Western border province alone and earlier than everybody else. Carrying out the Communist Group's assignment, he procured a printing press and was getting ready to start putting out propaganda literature for India in a zone of independent frontier tribes. [3] However, all those Indian revolutionaries were captured and thrown into prison. Later on, in 1922-1923, the British authorities staged a series of trials of their prisoners at Peshawar. The revolutionaries were charged with having ... participated in the so-called "Moscow-Tashkent Conspiracy" to overthrow British rule in India.

The colonial authorities wanted to warn the Indian people that to stay in Soviet Russia, adhere to the ideas of Socialism and spread them in India meant committing a very grave crime punishable under severest regulations. Muhammad Akbar Khan was tried twice. On the first occasion (May 31, 1922) he was sentenced to three years imprisonment in a top security jail and on the second one (April 24, 1923), that is after a letter he wanted to smuggle out

[1] See T. F. Devyatkina, M. N. Yegorova, A. M. Melnikov, *The Origin of the Communist Party of India...* pp. 164-168.

[2] Muzaffar Ahmad, "The Story of Rafiq Ahmad's Travels", *The Communist Party of India and Its Formation Abroad*, pp. 35-45.

[3] Ibid., pp. 52-54.

had been intercepted, to seven years. Other defendants were condemned to various terms of imprisonment within the same limits. [1]

The Peshawar trials were clear pointers not only to the British colonialists' abject fear of the force of Bolshevik influence on Indian society, but also to vigorous activities developed in India by the members of the first Communist Group formed in Tashkent and Moscow.

That was a long and complex process of preparing for the creation of an All-India Communist Party, involving an interaction and progressive merger of two Communist trends—external and internal—which had sprung up almost simultaneously.

Regrettably, S. V. Ghate ignores the activities of the Tashkent-Moscow group of Indian Communists and the link they had with their native land. While quite properly stating that it was not in Tashkent but at the All-India Communist Conference in Kanpur that the CPI was constituted, he used a set of erroneous arguments to make his point. He wrote: "Almost all of them had no record of socialist or working-class activity when in India. They had no connection with any group or trend in the country and represented no one. They did nothing to further the movement at home." [2]

But each revolutionary does begin his revolutionary activity sooner or later. The Indians who left India for Soviet Russia to study the revolutionary experience of the Russian working people and get Soviet aid for the battle to liberate India had thereby taken the first, yet very great step, on their way to the revolution. On having made their first study of Marxism and accepted that doctrine in Soviet Russia, and having then returned to their native land to popularise it, the foremost Indians made yet another, still more significant move which contributed not only to the struggle for India's national independence, but to the development of the Communist movement in the country. They could not have participated in the Socialist movement in earlier times (until 1921) because it was still virtually

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[1] Ibid., pp. 45-52; See also: S. M. Mehdi, *The Story Behind "Moscow-Tashkent Conspiracy Case?"*, Punjabi Publishers, New Delhi, 1967, p. 3.

[2] S. V. Ghate, "CMP Distorts History about Formation of CP of India", *New Age*, August 30, 1970, p. 4.

nonexistent in India. As to their non-involvement in the working-class movement, one must note that one peculiar feature about the swing of the petty-bourgeois revolutionary intellectuals of the Orient to the proletariat and its struggle was that this swing began with stage-by-stage learning of the theory of Marxism which subsequently made the new Socialists see the working class and understand its historic mission. Yet it was not in the name of the proletariat and its movement, still weak and spontaneous, but in search of effective means by which to deliver their native land from the yoke of colonial oppression that they turned to Marxism, in the first place. Nor is it surprising, therefore, that the Communist movement throughout the East should have come before the proletariat's conversion into a class for itself and anticipated the appearance of advanced forms of class struggle.

So that was the objective process of the origin and early evolution of the Communist movement in the East, initiated not by the proletariat but by progressive revolutionary-democratic and nationalist revolutionary intellectuals, actively involved in the struggle for national liberation. And that was the objective evolution of India's national revolutionaries on their way to Marxism.

The first Indian Communists considered the organisation of their military school their major concern and achievement. And that was perfectly logical, for overstating the role of the military factor in a revolution was the most important element of their entire system of left-sectarian views just as the similar views of other early Communists of the East—those in China, Iran, Turkey, Korea.

The Military School of Indian Revolutionaries. The Military Factor in Eastern Revolutions

M. N. Roy and the pioneer Indian Communists denied not only the anti-imperialist potentialities of the national bourgeoisie, but also the revolutionary potential of the Indian proletariat or, at least, questioned it. The point is that in their theories M. N. Roy and his group proceeded not from the prospect for a long-term struggle to organise and rally the forces of the Indian revolution, but sought to prove the feasibility and necessity of an immediate Socialist revolution. But there were no essential social and

economic conditions in the India of those days for such a task to be accomplished.

To begin with, there was no class-conscious proletariat, that is a working class "for itself". The only thing that showed it to be politically awakening was that it had started to pass, step by step, from a purely economic struggle to supporting the slogans of national liberation. Of course, that was an appreciable and necessary step forward in the long process of transforming the working class into a great revolutionary force of social development. There was no Communist party either, without which the very process of formation of a class-active proletariat could neither be carried on nor brought off.

One cannot say that M. N. Roy failed to see that specific aspect of Indian colonial society. Undoubtedly, he saw it, and even wrote and spoke about it, amazingly knitting together conflicting statements in his theoretical works. Inconsistency and eclectic fusion of Marxism and petty-bourgeois revolutionism may be said to have been the major elements of the entire system of his views.

While insisting over and over again on the high level of the class struggles of the Indian working people who, he claimed, had already dropped slogans about "sentimental nationalism", Roy simultaneously maintained something opposite. He referred many times, for instance, to the backwardness of the Indian working-class movement which was "still in its infancy", stressing that the organisation of the Indian revolutionary proletariat was almost impossible in the context of India dominated by British imperialism . [1] And then, replying to the proposal to organise the delivery of printed Communist propaganda from Europe, he wrote on December 23, 1920: "It is easy to have literature printed on good paper and in good type in Germany and have it smuggled out to India, but who will read it? At least 90 per cent of the population is illiterate."

While thinking of how to surmount that objective obstacle, Roy arrived at the conclusion that the only way to make an immediate Socialist revolution in India was by having a revolutionary army of liberation, formed in Soviet Russia or on the territory of independent Afghan tribes, move in.

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[1] See: "The Manifesto of the Revolutionary Party of India...", *Zhizn natsionalnostei*, July 25, 1920, p. 2.

It was not the revolutionary impatience alone that drove the Indian Communists to such a solution, although it did play a great role. There were some objective circumstances of different kind which influenced the first Indian Communists in the same vein.

The imperialist powers conducted an armed anti-Soviet intervention using the captive Eastern countries, contiguous to Russia, as their bridgeheads. In particular, India's early Communists could watch the mammoth anti-Soviet activities of British agents in Iran, Afghanistan, in Bukhara. Therefore, they had enough reason to believe that a march by armies of liberation from the territory of Russia into India was necessary and justified, all the more so since it, so they thought, could have turned the sweeping national liberation movement which was going on in their own country into a Socialist revolution. They were greatly impressed by the Red Army's successes on the Civil War fronts which seemed to demonstrate the great efficiency of military tactics in revolutionary struggles. What they accepted, however, was the Red Army's victories only, but failed to consider well that those victories had been possible only because of the support by the large masses of the revolutionary people and only because that was not a mercenary, nor a foreign army but a national army that was part of millions of insurgent workers and peasants and was led by the mature and great Party of Lenin. They forgot that the victories over the home-grown and foreign reactionary forces had been predetermined by the October Revolution, not the other way round. It was not clear enough to the "left" Communists, the Indian Communists among them, that the victorious course of military events had become possible only as a result of years of the Party's hard work to educate the masses, fuse the working-class movement with the ideas of Socialism, and consolidate the proletarian vanguard organisationally, ideologically and theoretically.

One more factor behind the banking on a revolutionary war with the help of an attacking army was that British imperialism had occupied a vast country with a population of 400 million for 150 years with the help of a small army—400,000 officers and men—and that it ruthlessly repressed not only any manifestation of sympathy for Soviet Russia and for Socialism in India but also the bourgeois-led democratic movement by military means. The early Indian Com-

munists believed that it was a revolutionary army alone that could crush the military force behind British rule, and that it was such an army alone that could clear the way to a Socialist revolution.

What influenced the position of the first Indian Communists in no small measure was their surviving petty-bourgeois nationalist revolutionary mentality. Many of upright Indian revolutionaries were most committed to extremism and terrorism. It was back at the time of the first Russian Revolution of 1905 that the most radical elements of the Indian petty-bourgeois intellectuals began to preach the idea that it was the army that had to play the decisive role in liberating India from British domination.[1] This was also the theory of diverse conspiratorial organisations of national revolutionaries. There was, for instance, a secret Muslim anti-English society, set up under the auspices of the Deoband School on the eve of World War I, that also sought to create a standing army to liberate India. And it was the frontier Pushtu tribes that were expected to play the major part, with support from Afghanistan, in forming it. Obeidullah Sindhi, one of the leaders of the Deoband Society, was delegated to Kabul for recruitment and other organisational work.[2] He stayed on in the Afghan capital for years afterwards. It was there that he became a member, in 1915, of the Provisional Government of India under M. Pratap which also shared the idea of a liberating army crusade from outside. It was also there that he, in 1921, became a member of the executive body of the newly-established Committee of the Indian National Congress. Indian Communists Mohammed Ali and Mohammed Shafiq contacted Obeidullah Sindhi in Kabul. The head of the Soviet Embassy in Afghanistan, F. F. Raskolnikov, reported on May 5, 1922 that Obeidullah Sindhi "stands by the left-wing of the Congress" and considers the "Pathan tribes ... to be the major external tool for expediting and facilitating the Indian revolution". It may be recalled that the Caliphate exodus movement was also consumed with the idea of having a Muslim liberation army formed

[1] See: A. V. Raikov, "The Anglo-Indian Army and the National Liberation Movement in India in 1905-1917", *Problemy vostokovedenia*, No. 2, 1959.

[2] See: L. R. Gordon-Polonskaya, *Muslim Trends in Social Thought of India and Pakistan*, Vostochnaya Literatura Publishers, Moscow, 1963, p. 183 (in Russian).

outside India. That is to say that the joint struggle, together with the Kemalists, against the Entente forces was not the *muhajirins'* only objective. M. N. Roy was a particularly zealous advocate of the idea of an armed expedition.

On a foreign tour in search of arms in 1915, Roy attempted to arrange for a foreign army to march on India to liberate it. A member of the Berlin group of Indian revolutionaries, Nalini Gupta related that Roy (acting at the time under the assumed name of Martin) sent him a letter from China in 1916 "in which ... he set out a plan to use 40,000 to 50,000 Chinese soldiers for an invasion of India". However, Sun Yatsen did not approve of Roy's plan, neither did Nalini Gupta.

The ideas of using the army as the starting factor in the revolution, that is having India liberated through a national revolutionary war organised by means of an armed expedition from without, persisted in the views of the first Indian Communists as a relic of their recent past.

The exaggerated notion of the role of the military factor in a revolution was due, in a way, to the Communists' divorce from the masses and to their lingering fear of real difficulties of working with the masses—ignorant and downtrodden.

In the opinion of the first Indian Communists, the army was to have replaced both the rather weak, if not altogether absent, class-conscious proletariat in India of those days and its revolutionary alliance with the peasantry, and even the Communist party itself. They thought they could rouse, with the army's help, the masses to a Socialist revolution which those masses did not, nor could, naturally, see as the necessary thing to do. Consequently, the idea was to give up trying to convince the working people and force upon the masses the "blessings" that the founders of Marxism-Leninism [1] had always rejected. The Indian Communists were not alone to hold such views at the time.

The leaders of the first Turkish and Iranian Communists were quite frank in speaking of the army as the primary revolutionary force in the Orient and as the only one capable of doing the job of the absent proletariat. Mustafa

[1] See: K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1975, p. 331; V. I. Lenin, "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up", *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964, pp. 352-353.

Subhi, who was the Chairman of the Council for International Propaganda in the East (Tashkent), and Sultan Zadeh, who was at the head of the Adalat organisation, reorganised into the Iranian Communist Party in June 1920, sent a letter to the Revolutionary Military Council of the Turkestan Front on March 11, 1920.

They asked for permission to form Iranian seasonal workers into some army units to be stationed in Turkestan. [1] Their reason for the request was that because of the colonial policies of Britain and Czarist Russia, which had turned Persia into their market and blocked the development of its national industry, that country found itself without any proletariat at all. In exchange, the colonialists had created a "whole army of pauperised proletarians" in Persian cities. In such circumstances, they went on to say, "with (nothing) but the peasant and semi-proletarian masses in Persia itself to rely on, we (Communists) would not be able to field enough forces against the landed oligarchy backed by England". Should the Iranian Communists have some armed forces, that would be a different matter. "Our Party hopes that with the help of those army units ... the working people of Persia would not only get rid of British imperialists but would once and for all be liberated from their own exploiters—capitalists and landlords—and would enter the fraternal commonwealth of the Soviet republics."

In another document, the Turkestan Area Committee of the Iranian Communist Party (Adalat) wrote (August 18, 1920) that the revolutionary army was "the vanguard of the socialist movement in the East" and that "the day is not far off when the gallant Persian Red Army will hoist a red banner in the heart of Persia's second capital Meshhed". [2] A similar idea was expressed by the first Korean Communists. Their report, drawn up in early November 1921, about the propaganda activities of the Political Department of the First Korean Brigade which had participated in the fighting on the Soviet side in the Far East, pointed out that "the force of the Korean revolution, which is part and parcel of the revolution in the East, resides in the Korean military units". [3]

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[1] SACSA, s. 110, r. I, f. 74, pp. 320-321.
[2] SACSA, s. 7321, r. I, f. 22, p. 1.
[3] SACSA, s. 1709, r. I, f. 3, p. 40.

It is clear that the theoretical and political immaturity, typical of the first Eastern Communists, was the main reason which caused them to overstate the role of the military factor in a revolution. Furthermore, the first Eastern Communists, Indian among them, considered a revolutionary expedition by Soviet forces to liberate their countries to be the principal means of starting socialist revolutions in Asian countries. The reasoning of Sultan Zadeh during a conference with Lenin on July 28 or 29, 1920 over the progress of the Ghilan Revolution in Persia is most noteworthy. The leader of the Iranian Communists declared for some radical agrarian reforms in Ghilan and, apparently realising that that was an unrealistic objective, went on to elaborate on the need "to act with determination in Persia and to dispatch more troops (over there)" so as to capture Teheran which, he claimed, would not be very difficult to do because "the population ... was just waiting for the Red Army to appear in order to rise..." Naturally, Lenin rejected Sultan Zadeh's adventurist offer.[1] The statement by the Turkish Communist Mustafa Nafi was no less typical. In the report he sent to the Revolutionary Military Council of the Soviet Republic in February 1921 he said: "The unfortunate Turkish workers and peasants and the whole proletariat are waiting for the Bolshevik Red Army which will deem it its duty to save their life all over the land from north to south, and rid them of despotism, tyranny and intrigues of the Turkish pashas who are more capitalistic and imperialistic than the English."[2] The same views, in point of substance, were held by certain Soviet Communists involved in the revolutionary struggle of the Asian peoples, not to speak of the adventurist Trotskyist elements in our country.[3]

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[1] For details, see: M. A. Persits, "The Ideological Battle over the Problems of Relation between the Communist and National Liberation Movements in the East at the Time of the Second Congress of the Comintern", *Narody Asii i Afriki*, No. 5, 1974, p. 46.

[2] SACSA, s. 33988, r. 2, f. 364, p. 794.

[3] See: B. M. Leibson, "Lenin's Assessment of the Situation and Prospects of World Revolution", *The Second Congress of the Comintern*, Moscow, 1972, pp. 24-25, 32-33; M. A. Persits, "Eastern Internationalists in Russia and Some Questions of the National Liberation Movement (1918-July 1920)", *The Comintern and the East*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979, pp. 110-123; Idem, "Lenin on the Left-Sectarian Mistakes of the Early Eastern Communists (1918-July 1920)", *Narody Asii i Afriki*, No. 2, 1970, pp. 62-69; Idem,

Overplaying the role of the military factor in the revolution, and even treating it as an absolute, were the major elements of left-sectarian theories widespread among the first Eastern Communists of the day.

Of course, each Oriental country had its own particular internal circumstances which conduced to spreading that kind of views. But there were some common reasons as well: the international situation keynoted by the anti-Soviet intervention of imperialist powers and the Red Army's victorious struggle on the Civil War fronts; the fact that the first Communist elements of the East had emerged principally from the midst of petty-bourgeois revolutionaries; the political immaturity and poor Marxist grounding of Asia's first Communists; and the weakness of the Asian proletariat, which had not yet created an independent class movement of its own.

While still in Moscow, Roy began to work out his plan to organise a military version of the revolution. He hoped that thousands upon thousands of Indian immigrants would start coming to Turkestan and could be banded together into a revolutionary brigade which he proposed to have complemented by units of independent tribes inhabiting the frontier regions from the Pamirs to Beluchistan, in the so-called Durand Strip.

Pressing the Soviet authorities for aid in setting up a liberation army, M. N. Roy wrote on November 25, 1920 to E. M. Sklyansky, Vice-Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the RSFSR, that "the tribesmen in the frontiers are very good elements for an offensive (against India) to be undertaken in due time". This "attacking army" set up outside the country was to have ensured the making of a Socialist revolution in India.

Shaukat Usmani wrote to M. N. Roy to tell him as something taken for granted that "before starting a Communist revolution in India we must occupy the country for that will make our job much easier".[1] The first Indian Communists

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"The Ideological Battle over the Problems of Relation between the Communist and National Liberation Movements in the East at the Time of the Second Congress of the Comintern", *Narody Asii i Afriki*, No. 5, 1974, pp. 45-47; Idem, "From the History of the Evolution of the Communist Party of China", *Narody Asti i Afriki*, No. 4, 1971, pp. 55-57.

[1] CPA IML.

did not find it in any way embarrassing that the soldiers of such an army—of whatever elements, whether of Indian immigrants involved in the Caliphate movement or of militiamen of frontier tribes who lived under a patriarchal-clan system—had no idea at all about Socialism.

Other Eastern Communists were just as indifferent to the social composition and political standard of the projected forces even though they did regard the armies as prime movers of Socialist revolution. For example, late in March and early in April 1920, Turkestan organisations of Iranian Communists, with assistance from the Turkestan Front, began to form a volunteer Persian international detachment of migrant seasonal workers.[1] However, the pauperised elements that made up a large proportion of the Iranian seasonal workers in Turkestan were not prepared to fight for Socialist goals that the first Iranian Communists had called on them to do. Perhaps, many of the seasonal workers joined the detachment because that meant getting a roof over their head and some decent food. Desertion, brawls, card playing, opium smoking and other drug habits, black market of unit equipment, absence without leave, and reluctance to learn the ABC of politics were rife. Ninety-nine per cent of the total strength of the detachment was illiterate. The detachment chief H. Hassanov reported in mid-August 1920, that the fighting men of his detachment were "mostly ill-clad and ill-fed teenagers or old men of the street", and that the "Political Department ... is powerless to influence those men".[2] The hope of creating a Persian Army 25,000- to 30,000-strong never materialised. So Hassanov proposed selecting the best of the fighting men for a "solid combat unit" and "expelling all bad elements from the detachment". That seems to be

[1] A company of former Turkish POWs was set up within the Persian international detachment at the request of the Council for International Propaganda and the Turkestan Bureau of the Turkish Communist organisations signed by M. Subhi (SACSA, s. 7321, r. I, f. 58, p. 22, and also f. I, p. 6, and f. 42, p. 60). By August 1920 the detachment had upwards of two hundred Turks in it (SACSA, f. 19, p. 25). Some of them were in commanding positions. In particular, H. Hassanov, a former colonel of the Turkish Army, was the detachment commander for a long time (SACSA, f. 63, p. 38). In September-October, all the Turks of the detachment were transferred to Baku, where the Central Bureau of the Turkish Communist organisations had its headquarters at the time. (SACSA, f. 42, pp. 232, 264).

[2] See: SACSA, s. 7321, r. 1, f. 42, pp. 200, 201, 201"a"; f. 17, p. 6.

just what they attempted to do. An order of the day of August 31, 1920 for the First Army of the Turkestan Front called for the Persian detachment to be reorganised into a "Special Persian International Infantry Regiment with an artillery platoon attached to it". [1] By September 3 the regiment had a total strength of 1,038, or 2,334 short of the establishment strength. [2]

Here is an example from the history of the Communist Party of China. Its First Congress in 1921 adopted the Party Programme stating that "the revolutionary army together with the proletariat must overthrow the power of the capitalist classes". The army came first. It was the army that was to make a Socialist revolution "together with the proletariat". [3] Now, since the early Chinese Communists had no army at all, they believed they could make it up of the bandits that operated in large numbers all over China. Zhang Tailei, one of the organisers of the Communist Party of China, speaking at the Third Congress of the Comintern, described the bandits as "fighting revolutionary material", if still "raw". [4]

The "Plan of Military Operation in the Borders and in India", [5] worked out by the first Indian Communists, pointed out explicitly that the attacking army raised "from among (independent) tribes will be naturally mercenary". But since the mercenaries could easily turn to pillage and plunder, the plan limited their role to carrying out initial strikes at the British forces and consistently liberating individual regions and districts of the country where revolutionary authority was to be established straight away and proletarian military units would begin to be created. Besides, the idea was to hand over the leadership of the mercenaries to Communist officers. It was envisaged that the proletarian army would gradually counterbalance the mercenary attacking army and would subsequently "become the main strength of the revolutionary forces in its advance in the country". Consequently, it was the army, not the proletariat, that was to lead the revolution.

[1] SACSA, s. 7321, r. 1, f. 50, p. 16.

[2] *Ibid.*, f. 17, p. 1.

[3] M. A. Persits, "Lenin on the Left-Sectarian Mistakes of the Early Eastern Communists (1918-July 1920)", *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 2, 1970, p. 64.

[4] *Narody Dalnego Vostoka*, No. 3, 1921, p. 335.

[5] "Plan of Military Operation in the Borders and in India", ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 489, pp. 10-11.

Incidentally, the plan referred not only to the organisation of military operations to ensure the victory of an armed proletarian revolution. At the very outset, its compilers asserted that "the ultimate success of the Proletarian Revolution in India greatly depends on the organisation of a strong, well-disciplined Party which will carry on an extensive doctrinarian propaganda among the masses of workers and poor landless peasantry". However, this contention was followed up by another one which made nonsense of that right idea. "The present state of the country," the document said, "and conditions of the people make all organisation and propaganda work ineffective, if not impossible", and therefore "military operations on a sufficiently large scale are indispensable for the beginning of the work". As a matter of fact, individual phrases elsewhere in the plan about the role of propaganda work with the masses or to the effect that "if possible, the military movement should be accompanied with a general strike" were pointless since they were considered as issues of secondary importance, rather than top-priority elements.[1]

The plan turned the whole organisation of the revolution upside down by leaving out a mass proletarian and peasant movement and, as a matter of fact, the Party's propaganda work and organisation of the masses.

The way the plan suggested for the revolutionary war to be transformed into a revolution of the masses is noteworthy in this respect. The attacking army, having liberated a particular region from the British authorities, would install provisional revolutionary working-class power in it, which was to begin demonstrating to the people through its law-making and administrative activities that the programme of the proletariat was "on the way to realisation" and that the revolution was, consequently, Socialist in character. Such a demonstration was needed "in order to get the masses to join the revolution with enthusiasm". The effect would be to stage armed uprisings in each liberated area. Subsequently, as more areas were liberated, regional uprisings would merge into one sweeping all-India uprising. British rule would be overthrown, and the Provisional Workers' Government, led by the Communist Party, would embark on a Socialist recasting of society. Roy's military plan, being as it was integral to the whole system

[1] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

of his views, was, of course, stamped with his own self-will and looked like a reckless venture.

M. N. Roy related in his memoirs how Lenin insisted, in talking to him, that the projected march of the attacking army through Afghanistan and India was impracticable and venturesome and that the very idea of creating such an army was far-fetched, and argued that there had to be different methods of struggle conducive to preparing a revolutionary situation in the country. [1]

Back in 1918, Lenin stated the Bolsheviks' position of principle with regard to imposing "blessings" on the masses and forcing them into tackling the tasks and using the methods they were not yet ripe to understand. "We have always said: the emancipation of the working people from oppression cannot be brought from outside; the working people themselves, by their struggle, by their movement, by their agitation, must learn to solve a new historical problem; and the more difficult, the greater, the more responsible this new historical problem is, the larger must be the number of those enlisted for the purpose of taking an independent part in solving it." [2]

M. N. Roy and his group set themselves an opposite aim—that of finding a solution to the new historical problem without the masses, without their direct involvement. Roy must have believed that the "Plan of Military Operation in the Borders and in India" was the clue to this issue.

Having arrived in Tashkent, the Provisional All-India Central Revolutionary Committee tried to carry through the plan of organising a revolutionary attacking army. It decided to begin by training revolutionary officers who were to get down to putting together the attacking army. The plan to organise a military school was ready by October 5, 1920. [3] A report on the activities of the Indian Revolutionary Committee pointed out that the Committee regarded the organisation of the Military School "as its principal work" and called on it: first, to teach all Indian revolutionaries to handle arms, which most of them could never do because of the harsh firearm possession acts imposed

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[1] See: *M. N. Roy's Memoirs*, p. 417.

[2] V. I. Lenin, "Fourth Conference of Trade Unions and Factory Committees of Moscow, June 27-July 2, 1918", *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965, p. 469.

[3] See: Outline Plan to Organise a Military School to Train Indian Revolutionaries as Commanding Officers.

on India over the last 75 years; second, [prepare the forces] for underground propaganda in the [British colonial] Army the bulk of which is voicing its discontent; third, train Indians as officers to take the place of British officers upon the outbreak of the revolution ... and to issue competent orders for the revolutionary units... [1]

Indian revolutionaries asked the Soviet Government for help in setting up military courses and in providing them with material equipment and teaching staffs. This request was granted. A Plenary Meeting of the RCP(B) Central Committee passed a special decision (evidently in mid-1920), approved by the Comintern, for a certain amount of money and arms to be supplied to the Indian revolutionaries for their struggle against imperialism. [2] Similar decisions were taken on the issue of assistance for the Iranian and Turkish revolutionaries anxious to participate in their peoples' armed struggles against imperialists. In carrying out these decisions, the Soviet Government proceeded from its invariable policy of lending assistance to the oppressed peoples' anti-imperialist struggle of liberation, whose objectives were entirely in accord with the interests of the Soviet Republic, which was, besides, beating back the armed intervention by imperialist powers. Material support and communication of military and political knowledge to the Indian, Iranian and Turkish revolutionaries were important forms of such assistance and had nothing to do with the impracticable plans of the first Eastern Communists, still less pointed to Soviet Russia's intention to overrun Turkey, Iran, or India, as bourgeois historians have since been claiming. [3] An order of the day, dated October 11, 1920, for the Turkestan Front announced that the All-India Central Revolutionary Committee had set up the First Indian Commanding Courses for All Arms with N. A. Kiselev, undergraduate of the Academy of the General Staff, in command. [4] However, on December 21, 1920 Kiselev left for Moscow to continue his own course of study at the Academy. He was succeeded first by Khodoyarkhanov and, from February 1921, by G. N. Frolov, a former Czarist officer who had joined the

[1] ORCSA, s. 5402, r. I, f. 488, p. 3.

[2] See: R. A. Ulyanovsky, *Essays on the National Liberation Struggle*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1976, pp. 105-106 (in Russian).

[3] For details, see: *The Comintern and the East. A Critique of the Critique*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979.

[4] SACSA, s. 25025, r. 2, f. 2, p. 2; r. 1, f. 11, p. I.

Red Army and had some experience in organising military training and instruction. [1]

It took two months to man the school with commanding officers, teaching staffs and service personnel. A. M. Tarakanov, an authentic representative of Russia's mass of workers, peasants and soldiers who had made the October Revolution and were now defending their country and building up the Soviet state, was appointed (on December 11, 1920) political director of the school and was principally responsible for political instruction and education of Indians. A. M. Tarakanov, a 27-year-old former peasant and subsequently textile worker, joined the Party in June 1917 while on the front lines. He was chairman of a revolutionary regiment committee at the time of the October Revolution. Upon demobilisation in 1918 he was chairman of a village Soviet (council) and of a provincial Executive Committee. In 1919 and in early 1920 he was a Communist cell organiser on a district Party Committee. For a short period in 1920 he was assistant political director of the First Moscow Artillery and Infantry Courses from where he was sent to Tashkent to work with the Indian revolutionaries. [2]

A considerable proportion of the teaching and administrative staffs and service personnel of the school was made up of members of the Soviet mission of military instructors that was on its way to Kabul at the request of the Afghan Government but stopped in Tashkent [3] because the Emir refused to admit them under pressure from Britain.

It was not only Soviet citizens but some of the former POWs—Austrians, Germans, Slovaks, members of the internationalist movement who fought on the Civil War fronts in defence of Soviet government—that worked with the Indians. It is noteworthy that an Austrian Communist, Anton Graneder, appointed as a platoon commander at the Indian Military School put down "internationalist" under the heading of "nationality" as he filled in his questionnaire. [4] He worked in company of platoon commanders Ivan Kaučič, a Slovene, Franz Praendel, a German, Husain Yambulatov, a Tatar, Dmitry Savanovich, a Byelorus-

[1] Ibid., r. 1, f. 11, p. 16; r. 2, f. 3, pp. 2, 3.
[2] Ibid., s. 25025, r. 2, f. 2, p. 22; r. 1, f. 13, p. 2; r. 1, f. 11, p. 2.
[3] Ibid., r. 2, f. 2, pp. 2, 3, 4; f. 28, p. 4.
[4] Ibid., r. 1, f. 13, p. 4.

sian, who was Secretary of the Communist cell, a Ukrainian, Ivan Marchenko, who was Chairman of the Communist cell, was a riding instructor. [1]

The prevailing mood at the school, that of its staff and their activities was one of proletarian internationalism which mattered a lot for the political education of young Indian revolutionaries. The first group to arrive for training on November 10 consisted of eleven men: Shafiq Mohammed Siddiqi, Nazir Siddiqi, Mansur Firozuddin, Trip Abdul Hamid, Mir Abdul Majid, Fida Ali Zahid, Aziz Gawreiman, Kurashi Mohammed Sebhar, Shah Selshi, Mihra Bisheidas, Mahommajan Abdul Qarim. [2] All of them were enrolled in the air department which began classes under the direction of the air flight commander V. V. Goppe on November 12. [3] The number of students increased slowly. A further eight Indians were admitted in December: Basherullah Ghulam Ahmad, Sayed Mohammed, Aziz Ahmad, Wafa Habib Mohammed, Alishah Masood, Gawhar Abdurahman, Fattyh, Ghulam Amir. It was, evidently, upon the arrival of this second group that an infantry-machine-gun department began to function. The school had no more departments. Nine men arrived in January 1921—Abdul Guayum, Habib Ahmad Mansoor, Ghulam Rasul, Mohammed Abdullah, Ismail Khan, Fazl, Abdul Hamid, Mohammed Farukh, Mahmujan Shamil. [4]

Early in February, the school had twenty-seven pupils "present". [5] Usually, from two to four men were on various missions under instructions from the Indian Revolutionary Committee. So the list of students had, as a rule, more than there were actually present. Nabi Bahash Abdurahman, Abdulla Inoyat and others entered the school in March, Fazl Ilahi, Sahrai, Ram Das, Kudu Mal, Manohar Nasir and others did so in April. [6] The order of the day, dated April 22, 1921, announced that there were thirty-nine students on the list, and four of them on business missions. That is to say that thirty-five were actually present. That number rose to forty after April 25. [7] No more of the Indi-

[1] Ibid., r. 2, f. 7, pp. 2, 4, 13; r. I, f. 13, p. 7.
[2] Ibid., r. 2, f. 2, p. 7; the names hereinafter are given according to the Russian transcription in archive documents.
[3] Ibid., r. 2, f. 2, p. 7.
[4] Ibid. r. 2, f. 40, pp. 1, 2, 5-9.
[5] Ibid., r. 1, f. 2, p. 49.
[6] Ibid., r. 2, f. 40, pp. 8, 10, 11, 16, 17, 20.
[7] Ibid., r. 2, f. 17, p. 28.

ans who had enough training to study military subjects, could be enlisted, although the projected admission was to have been 110. Some ten illiterate or unprepared Indians were enrolled as Red Armymen. [1] That is, shortly upon being opened, the Military School discovered a shortage of those who wished to attend it. This was due again to M. N. Roy's left-sectarian tactics and to the incessant feuding it provoked between the Revolutionary Committee and the Association. For that reason, many members of the Association who would have liked to attend the school did not enter it.

By bringing up the objectives of Socialist revolution for the students to study, M. N. Roy and A. Mukherji, naturally, kept the Indians sticking to the positions of nationalism away from the school. Yet even those admitted were by no means prepared to fulfil the mission M. N. Roy entrusted to them. A. M. Tarakanov wrote, for instance, that "the students, having practically no idea of Socialism, are full of ethnic and, partly, religious prejudices".[2]

Yet for all that, Roy was in a hurry, leaving no time for serious political training of the students. Indeed, he believed that there ought to be a Socialist revolution immediately. In his letter of November 20, 1920 to E. M. Sklyansky, he attempted to prove that Indians must not enter Soviet military educational establishments because "their course of instruction is too long..." while the Indians "have to be taught and sent to India and to her borders for work". The school functioned for less than seven months. Its closure was announced on April 27, 1921. [3] The students were offered an opportunity to continue their studies at appropriate institutions of learning in Soviet Russia.

And yet, the Military School, even though short-lived, played a positive role. Soviet commanders and political officers worked enthusiastically, striving to pass on the whole of their military and revolutionary experience to their Indian brothers. In March 1921 A. M. Tarakanov had this to say about the Soviet people who worked at the school: "The teachers are anxious to equip their students with the military knowledge that is indispensable to

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[1] SACSA, r. 2, f. 2, pp. 17, 19.

[2] See: A. M. Tarakanov's Report of March 13, 1921 to the Comintern Chairman, p. 2.

[3] SACSA, s. 25025, r. 2, f. 16, pp. 1-2.

a Red Army commander in the Civil War and the revolutionary struggles, and train their students to develop a conscious revolutionary discipline.[1] He also pointed out that the teachers themselves were revolutionaries who had "emerged from the midst of workers and peasants" and who "live in close unity with the students".[2]

Rafiq Ahmad, one of those who became Communists in Soviet Russia and studied at this school, would relate years after: "We learned to handle machine-guns and studied gunnery. Some of us were training to fly an airplane. Naturally, we had regular drill exercises." However, the author wrote, "the newly-established Military School provided political as well as military training for its students".[3]

The school experienced great difficulties—there was a shortage of teachers, the academic process was complicated because of the need of double translation (from Russian into English and from English into Urdu), and there was little military equipment, although, as M. N. Roy and many bourgeois authors maintained, it was taken over to Tashkent in two freight trains of 27 cars each.[4] It was, however, the organisation of political education of students that caused the greatest difficulties. It was a matter of great concern not only to the political director and the chief of the Military School but also to the Party organisation and the entire teaching staff.

A. M. Tarakanov wrote in one of his reports to the Political Department of the Tashkent Board of Military Training Establishments that only political education could "make" of students "revolutionary leaders... Red commanders who could be an example to emulate and worthy leaders of the revolutionary army in the cause of liberating the enslaved masses of India from the yoke of English capital."[5] The managers of the school many times asked the Tashkent Board of Military Training Establishments and even the Comintern, for teachers of social sciences to be

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[1] See: A. M. Tarakanov's Report..., p. 1.

[2] See: A version of the same report by A. M. Tarakanov, SACSA, s. 25025, r. 1, f. 11, p. 11.

[3] Quoted from: Muzaffar Ahmad, *The Communist Party of India and Its Formation Abroad*, p. 30; see also: I. Andronov, "From the History of the Awakening of the East", *New Times*, 1967, No. 14, p. 12.

[4] See below pp. 253-256.

[5] SACSA, s. 25025, r. 1, f. 11, p. 11.

sent over, provided they were "familiar with the Orient" and had "great political vision".[1] Apparently, a small proportion of the students, the best prepared and communist-minded, was also preoccupied with removing shortcomings in the organisation of political education and laid down certain demands to that end. The demands were noteworthy because they showed how much the political interests of Indian revolutionaries had grown and expanded during their sojourn in the Soviet Republic. In his report of February 1921 to the Political Department of the Tashkent Board of Military Training Establishments, A. M. Tarakanov wrote, in particular: "There is nobody at all to teach the ABC of politics, and I have to deputise for a time, but I consider myself unprepared to read the ABC of politics for the Indians as the lectures they will find interesting must be on the following subjects: the history of revolution and evolution; *Capital* of Karl Marx, Marx' economic theories; Communism and its historical definition; how to organise work; what the Soviet state is and what purposes it pursues, and in what way it differs from the capitalist state; the international working-class movement."[2]

Naturally, everything possible was done to improve the standard of instruction in social subjects. More teachers and lecturers appeared: Berkut was giving a course of political work, Kolosov conducted classes of political economy, Kazantsev and Vera Freiman, those of the ABC of politics, and Alexander Freiman was in charge of the organisation of lecturing.[3]

Indians were invited to be active in social and Party activities at the school. A mixed Communist cell was made up not only of teachers but also of students—M. Shafiq, Massood Alishah, Abdul Hamid, Aziz and Salim. Shafiq was elected a full member and Abdul Hamid, an alternate member of the Presidium of the cell.[4] The Indians did interesting club-house work. The school had a commission which dealt with recreational activities and cultural education. It was headed by I. P. Marchenko, with Nazir as his deputy and M. Shafiq as secretary.[5] As Tarakanov communicated, the Indians were rehearsing a three-act

[1] Ibid., r. 1, f. 11, pp. 9, 11; r. 1, f. 2, p. 54.
[2] Ibid., r. 1, f. 11, p. 8.
[3] Ibid., s. 25025, f. 2, p. 54; r. 2, f. 36, pp. 7, 12; r. 1, f. 2, p. 30.
[4] Ibid., r. 1, f. 3, pp. 6, 7, 13.
[5] Ibid., r. 1, f. 6, p. 3.

drama under a meaningful title *The Moon-Russia*, written by one of the students. On March 12, 1921 the students joined with members of the Proletarian Culture Club in holding an international soirée. First they put on a Russian play and then the *Moon-Russia* which was a real hit.[1] Unfortunately, the text of the play has never been found. In all likelihood, it, to judge by the title, was about the power of attraction Soviet Russia had by holding up the torchlight of the October Revolution to show the way for Indians to freedom, and about Indian revolutionaries roused by the October Revolution to a stout battle for their country's liberation. I believe the only author could be the twenty-year-old poet Habib Wafa who directed the theatrical section of the Commission for Cultural Education.[2] Later on, he adopted Soviet citizenship and became a member of the Union of Soviet Writers and a scholar. His plays were running in Soviet theatres and his verses were printed in literary magazines and reviews. He became a professor of the Institute of Oriental Studies where he held an Indian languages chair and was the first in the USSR to set up a scientifically-governed course of Hindustani.

In the process of political instruction and education of the Indians, the staff of the Military School took into account its complexity and did not rush things. When there was a suggestion to invite students to take part in all-city economic recovery *subbotniks* (Saturdays), the chief of the teaching department, S. Kolomiitsev wrote in a report to the Headmaster (in the opening days of February 1921): the Indians "have not yet adapted themselves at the school, they do not understand the rules of discipline they are expected to obey, and show themselves to be excessively sensitive because of their particular racial background. There is no political, nor military education... In view of the foregoing, I deem it necessary not to call on the trainees to turn out for working Sundays (*voskresniks*) in the first few months of training, giving special attention during this period to their political, physical and military training as well as to providing the facilities for them to learn the Russian as soon as possible". The Headmaster agreed with him.[3]

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[1] SACSA, r. 1, f. 11, p. 8; s. 110, r. 5, f. 523, p. 4.
[2] Ibid., r. 1, f. 6, p. 3.
[3] Ibid., f. 2, p. 49.

Yet the process of the Indians' political maturing seemed to proceed faster and more efficiently than the men who worked with them had expected. As early as February 14, 1921, a general staff meeting discussed the role of unpaid working Saturdays and Sundays in rebuilding the country's war-ravaged economy. Reports were made by A. M. Tarakanov and M. Shafiq. They reviewed the hard economic situation of the Soviet Republic and called on teachers, trainees and Red Armymen of the Military School to do their bit towards national economic recovery. Shafiq said that the Indians "must take most enthusiastic part in working Saturdays and Sundays because they have found refuge and protection under Soviet government" which was striving "for the liberation of the proletariat of the Orient". The meeting took note of both reports and resolved that the trainees should "attend the *voskresniks*".[1] On April 17, the trainees turned out for their first all-city *voskresnik*, and on April 19 the school management issued a special order of the day to review their performance on so important an occasion. It pointed out that all the participants in the *voskresnik*—members of the staff and "Indian trainees" showed "energy at work and devotion to the common cause", and they "with honour (discharged) their duty in rebuilding the war-ravaged Soviet economy". The order of the day recorded the conviction that "on their return to their native land, the trainees will be able to lead the proletariat of India to the final overthrow of British capital and the establishment of their own proletarian Soviet rule".[2]

It is difficult for us to judge how effective actual military training was at the First Indian Courses for All Arms, but political education was effective and that not so much because of the efforts of competent teachers of social subjects—for they had not appeared overnight and there were very few of them—as because of the Indians' close contact with the Soviet people, including their teachers, and because of the trainees' participation in this country's public affairs. Many Indians gained a closer understanding of the ideas of Socialism, the character of the Soviet state and the essence of its policy based on Lenin's principles or proletarian internationalism and the right of nations to self-

[1] Ibid., f. 3, p. 12.
[2] Ibid., r. 2, f. 17, p. 21.

determination. At a later stage, Indian revolutionaries took home with them the knowledge they had acquired and the understanding they had developed in Soviet Russia of the tasks before India. That was just what British imperialism feared most although it disguised that fear of the ideological influence of Bolshevism by playing up the alleged danger of a Soviet armed invasion of India.

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Bourgeois historians still claim that Soviet Russia planned at its very inception to overrun India and had supposedly taken some practical steps to that end.

This is the standpoint of the Indian scholar Bandyopadhyaya. Yet he still had to admit in his book that some of the leaders of the Indian national liberation movement, as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, to name but two, did not, by a long shot, share the idea of aggressive plans of the Soviet authorities with regard to India, although that idea had been floated far and wide by the British press even in connection with the victory of the October Revolution and, more particularly, during the third Anglo-Afghan war of 1919, and after it. Bandyopadhyaya quoted Gandhi as having declared: "I have never believed in a Bolshevik menace."

The author quoted more of that statement in which the Indian leader denounced the repressive policy of British imperialism in India and stressed Soviet Russia's noble role in opposing it. "Fraternization of the Soviet Union with Asiatic countries and the anti-British policy of King Amanullah in Afghanistan," Gandhi said, "served as a check on the naked repressive character of British imperialism."[1] Bandyopadhyaya did not confine himself to that remark but went on to make what were unpalatable conclusions for him. He wrote that even Mahatma Gandhi who "had no ideological sympathies whatsoever for the Communist view-point", nevertheless "seems to have thought at this time that the Soviet Union was, directly or indirectly, promoting the cause of freedom in the world" and, in particular, that "the Russian Revolution had helped the Indian people in their struggle for freedom". Bandyopadhyaya went on to point out that "even relatively conservative leaders

[1] G. Bandyopadhyaya, *Indian Nationalism...*, pp. 143, 144.

in India took a somewhat favourable view of the Russian Revolution in the early years".

So, how did Bandyopadhyaya propose to reconcile these more or less objective conclusions with the anti-Soviet thrust of his book? He simply declared the nationalist leaders' favourable views on the October Revolution invalid because the Indian leaders did not know about the aggressive designs of the Soviet Government, Lenin and the Comintern with respect to India. He wrote: "These views indicate that the Indian leaders at this time *were unaware of the ideological, strategic and tactical considerations regarding India which were engaging the serious attention of Lenin, the Bolshevik Government and the Comintern*, and the nature of Soviet activities in Tashkent and other parts of Central Asia"[1] (emphasis added—*M. P.*).

Allegations of Soviet Russia's intention of the early twenties to occupy India had been made by British propaganda in an effort to justify England's involvement in the anti-Soviet intervention. In general, the governments of imperialist powers accused the Soviet authorities in those years of "insatiable aggressiveness" and of attempts to seize just about the whole world. Lenin ridiculed and exposed the class nature of one of such spurious charges. In his Report on the Party Programme at the Eighth Congress of the RCP(B), he said: "Now Scheidemann's party is already saying that we want to conquer Germany. That is of course ridiculous, nonsensical. But the bourgeoisie have their own interests and their own press, which is shouting this to the whole world in hundreds of millions of copies; Wilson, too, is supporting this in his own interests. The Bolsheviks, they declare, have a large army, and they want, by means of conquest, to implant their Bolshevism in Germany." [2]

Some Western historians of our day have been making such allegations and seeking to prove them even more often than in the past. David N. Druhe, an American historian, is one of those who have come forward with that kind of idea. In his outspokenly anti-Soviet and anti-Communist book *Soviet Russia and Indian Communism*, he clearly showed his utter contempt for Indian revolutionaries, heir ambitions and misconceptions. It is his book that

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[1] Ibid., pp. 143, 144, 145.

[2] V. I. Lenin, "Eighth Congress of the RCP(B), March 18-23, 1919", *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, 1977, p. 173.

Bandyopadhyaya usually refers to in search of arguments to bear out his own points. Opening his story with a glance back upon the history of Russian-Indian relations, Druhe tells us, essentially, of course, about the intention of Paul and Alexander I to join with Napoleon in crushing England with a blow at India and also about the abortive attempts at organising military marches on the Indian subcontinent undertaken by other Russian Czars in the nineteenth century. He follows that up with concluding that in spite of all that, Czarist "Russia had no design of invading India either to liberate the Indians or to substitute Russian for British rule in the Peninsula". Then Druhe went on to describe the Soviet intention which, naturally, "was an entirely different matter". [1] Druhe considers that "as applied to India, the plan of the world revolution (which he appears to know perfectly well, of course—*M. P.*), meant nothing more nor less than the substitution of the British Raj by a disguised Russian Raj, ruled as a radical Indian Organisation, the Communist Party of India". [2] It is quite interesting to note that as early as 1920 Leo Pasvolsky formulated just about the same idea. He wrote: "This Russia is found to be, by its very nature, insatiably aggressive ... though in a different sense from its Imperial predecessor" because the Soviet Government dreams of a world revolution, of spreading it to Asia, and of "an armed expedition into India, calculated to arouse whatever revolutionary fires ... in that land."[3] Unlike Druhe and Pasvolsky, another American historian, Chattar Singh Samra, of Indian extraction, tried to give substance to the old contention that the presence of Austrian, German and Turkish POWs in Central Asian regions of Soviet Russia created a stark danger of an invasion of India by a Turko-German Army through Afghanistan. He writes of some unknown "German machinations" allegedly encouraged by Soviet Russia which "threaten the very gates of India".[4] He goes as far as to try and justify the British intervention in Soviet Russia, holding it to have been an act of self-defence against the Bolsheviks who did not only contribute

[1] David N. Druhe, *Op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Leo Pasvolsky, *Russia in the Far East*, The MacMillan Company, New York, 1922, pp. 6, 71, 101.
[4] Chattar Singh Samra, *India and Anglo-Soviet Relations (1917-1947)*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1959, p. 25.

to the Turko-German crusade but made "efforts—warlike in the beginning but passive afterwards—to spread Communism in India".[1] To back up his argument about the Soviet Government's "encouragement" of the Turko-German intentions, the author refers to the recollections of some figures involved in the British intervention in Soviet Turkestan: the British Consul in Kashgar P. T. Etherton,[2] the head of the so-called Military Diplomatic Mission of Great Britain in Tashkent, Lt.-Col. F. M. Bailey,[3] and Major-General W. Malleson.[4] It was under the latter's command that British forces invaded the territory of the Trans-Caspian Region in August 1918. Not even by drawing upon the material of such authors did Chattar Samra succeed in producing any "evidence" at all. He just stated the opinion of the above-mentioned leaders that "a Turko-German Army might materialise for a campaign against India through Afghanistan".[5] It is, however, well known that there was no Turko-German army at all in Soviet Russia. There were just some former POWs scattered throughout many regions of this country whom the Soviet Government was repatriating at regular intervals from 1918 onwards.

Samra opened his book by stating his intention to contribute towards resolving the controversial question of whether Soviet Russia's policy towards India was a follow-up to the imperialist designs of Czarism or not. He did not give any straightforward answer to this question. But, quoting plenty of anti-Soviet fabrications of the *Times of London*, even those he found to be false himself, and using biassed reports borrowed from the memoirs of interventionists—British generals and intelligence agents, and declaring all that to be facts, Samra wanted his reader to accept Druhe's standpoint. Druhe's arguments were more ramified but by no means more convincing. They reposed on outright inventions, uncritical references to what were clearly committed sources and unjustified conclu-

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[1] Ibid., pp. 26, 158.

[2] P. T. Etherton, *In the Heart of Asia*, Constable and Company Ltd., London, 1925.

[3] F. Bailey, *Mission to Tashkent*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1946, pp. 8-9.

[4] Wilfrid Malleson, "The British Military Mission to Turkestan. 1918-1920", *Journal of the Central Asian Society*, Vol. IX, Part II.

[5] Chattar Singh Samra, *Op. cit.*, p. 24.

sions drawn from them. As the major piece of evidence to prove Soviet Russia's aggressive intentions the author takes his own contention that the Plan of Military Operation in the Borders and in India, drawn up by M. N. Roy, had been "approved in the early autumn of 1920 by the Politburo of the Russian Communist Party and the Council of People's Commissars" and also by Lenin who supposedly felt that Roy's scheme "was in the interest of the world revolution".[1] That is not so, however. The Plan of Military Operation in the Borders and in India reflected in a striking way many symptoms of the infantile disorder of "leftism" which afflicted the early Communists of the East and even some Soviet officials as well. Lenin was the first to have detected this disease of Eastern Communists and fought hard against it even long before the Second Congress of the Comintern, at the Congress and after it.

During the preliminary discussion of Lenin's Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions before the Second Congress of the Comintern, a group of Soviet political workers from Turkestan, T. Ryskulov, N. Khodjayev and others, unequivocally raised the question of a liberation march by the Red Army into India through Afghanistan. In their letter to Lenin of June 12, 1920 they tried to prove that "India must be liberated by the Muslim proletariat with the help of Soviet Russia and, by all means, before the revolution in London..."[2]

The idea of the "blessings" forced upon not only India but upon all colonial and dependent countries adjacent to Russia was expressed also by Ye. A. Preobrazhensky. Opposing Lenin's argument about the duty of Communists to support the national liberation movement in the East, he presumed: "...if the possibility of economic agreement with the leading national groups is ruled out, their suppression by force and forcible incorporation will be inevitable...[3]

Lenin emphatically objected to all possible projects and attempts to "bring about" a Socialist revolution in Oriental countries by force of arms. On Preobrazhensky's remark, he pronounced himself in his strongest and negative terms: "...It goes too far. It cannot be proved, and it is wrong to say that *suppression* by force is 'inevitable'.

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[1] David N. Druhe, *Op. cit.*, p. 31.
[2] CPA IML, s. 489, r. 1, f. 4, p. 5.
[3] *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, No. 2, 1958, p. 16.

That is radically wrong." [1] Back at the Eighth Party Congress, Lenin emphasised: "Communism cannot be imposed by force." [2] In those distant times, left-minded Asian Communists more than once proposed, as was stated earlier on, organising a liberation march by the Red Army to spark off revolution not only in India but also in China, Turkey, and Iran. However, Lenin rejected such proposals emphatically, [3] the way he did during his conversations with M. N. Roy before the Second Congress of the Comintern.

Lenin's statement of the Communists' indispensable duty to help the national liberation struggles of the peoples of the East remained unchanged and was approved by decision of the Second Congress of the Comintern.

So much for the position of principle which indicated that neither the Politburo of the RCP(B) Central Committee, nor the Council of People's Commissars, nor Lenin could approve of the left-sectarian Plan of Military Operation in the Borders and in India. So what does David Druhe base his contention on? His only source is M. N. Roy's memoirs. But, for one thing, in his recollections, too, Roy mentioned Lenin's disagreement with his plan for an armed version of Indian revolution, [4] and, for another, one cannot regard this source as absolutely credible. It contains many errors, whether intended or unintended, and its material requires thorough verification, as one could see already in considering the question of the so-called Communist Party of India proclaimed in Tashkent, and a number of other issues.

There has to be some checking in this case as well. Let us have a look at a well-known document, also written by M. N. Roy, not thirty-five years after the event, but just as it occurred. There is not a word about the subject of interest to us in the Comintern's official Report of the Work Done by the Provisional All-India Central Revolutionary Committee, which would have been impossible, if the Council of

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[1] V. I. Lenin, "Notes to Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, 1974, p. 555.

[2] V. I. Lenin, "Eighth Congress of the RCP(B), March 18-23, 1919", *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, 1974, p. 175.

[3] For details see: M. A. Persits, "Ideological Battle Over the Problems of Relation of the Communist and Liberation Movement at the Time of the Second Congress of the Comintern", *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 5, 1974, pp. 45-47.

[4] *M. N. Roy's Memoirs*. p. 417.

People's Commissars had approved of Roy's military plan. For that report contained a most detailed account not only of all the practical activities of Indian revolutionaries, but of the background to them as well.

By ascribing to the Bolsheviks M. N. Roy's leftist precepts regarding the decisive role of the military factor in preparing and making a Socialist revolution in India, David Druhe attempted to find evidence to bear out his argument. He treated the Soviet policy of backing the national liberation movements of the peoples of Iran, Xinjiang, and, particularly, Afghanistan as major acts in carrying through the ostensibly projected invasion of India. It is nothing short of surprising that the author should not have declared the Soviet policy of friendship and cooperation with the peoples of China and Turkey to have been the same kind of acts and should not have contended that it was in order to carry out Roy's plan that the Soviet Government had published, back in 1917, its appeal *To All the Working Muslims of Russia and the East!*.

One of the essential arguments in Druhe's chain of "evidence" was his "thrilling" story of the arrival in Tashkent, on October 1,1920, of two trains, each of which was composed of 27 cars loaded with arms, ammunition, outfit, dismantled airplanes and also gold bullion and pound notes. There was a group of military instructors in one car, and M. N. Roy, the head of the expedition bound for Afghanistan, in another.[1] Overstreet and Windmiller quoted that story, too.[2] The only thing they added was that for the Bolsheviks "apart from offering a weapon against Britain, India in itself presented an attractive object for the export of revolution";[3] and claimed that, soon after his arrival in Tashkent, M. N. Roy had already "formed what he described as the first international brigade of the Red Army"[4] for the invasion of India. What happened in reality?

Arms and ammunition that arrived in Tashkent, escorted by a small group of military instructors, were meant essentially for Afghanistan for which the Government of Amanullah-Khan had asked the Soviet Government and which had been promised to it. Back on November 27, 1919,

[1] See: David N. Druhe, *Op. cit.*, p. 32.
[2] See: Gene D. Overstreet, Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India*, p. 35.
[3] Ibid., p. 8.
[4] Ibid., p. 35.

Lenin, replying to Amanullah-Khan's letter on the subject, which had been brought to Moscow by the Afghan mission of Mohammad Wali Khan, sent a friendly message to Kabul. In it, he announced that the Soviet representatives in Kabul had been instructed to enter into negotiations to conclude trade and other friendship treaties with a view "not only to strengthening good-neighbourly relations to the best advantage of both peoples, but promoting the joint struggle in conjunction with Afghanistan against the most predatory imperialist government in the world, Great Britain..." Lenin also wrote that in his conversations with Mohammad Wali Khan he learned about Afghanistan's desire to obtain military aid and that the Soviet Government "is inclined to offer this aid to the Afghan people on the widest scale".[1] Incidentally, the mission of military instructors which was on its way to Kabul at the Emir's request was not led by M. N. Roy, nor was under his control. Roy was simply travelling in its train to Tashkent.

Invariably committed to supporting the national liberation struggle of oppressed peoples, the Soviet Government was not only the first to recognise the independence of Afghanistan, won in the hard war with Britain, but lent it whatever material support it could. That was in the mutual interest of Afghanistan and Soviet Russia, since both nations were upholding their right to existence in the struggle against British imperialism. Britain was waging an undeclared predatory war against Soviet Russia along with backing up its internal armed enemies—the Whiteguards and the *basmach* bands. Back in July 1918, Lenin said that "counter-revolutionary revolts have broken out in a number of towns in Central Asia with the obvious complicity of the British entrenched in India".[2] If Afghanistan and Soviet Russia could have acted in common against the British armed forces, that, too, would have been a fair act having nothing to do with the conquest of India.

Under pressure from Britain, Kabul refused to admit the Soviet mission, and it remained in Tashkent. In consequence, some of its instructors began to teach at the Indian Mil-

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[1] Quoted from: A. N. Kheifets, *Soviet Russia and Adjacent Eastern Countries, 1918-1920*, Moscow, 1964, pp. 286-287 (in Russian).

[2] V. I. Lenin, "Speech at a Joint Session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, the Moscow Soviet, Factory Committees and Trade Unions of Moscow, July 29, 1918", *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, 1965, p. 23.

itary School. In the orders of the day issued at the school, one could often come across this formula: "So-and-so, coming from the Russian Mission to Afghanistan ... shall be appointed to the office of..."[1] Some of the military equipment brought over was also used to teach the trainees.

That is to say that the very organisation of the Military School and its manning with teaching staffs and supplying with financial, military and technical resources expressed that very help to Indian revolutionaries, "with arms and gold" which was required under a resolution of the Plenary Meeting of the RCP(B) Central Committee in the latter half of 1920.

In an attempt to justify the argument about Soviet Russia's intention to overrun India, Druhe and other authors produced anything but convincing "evidence".

The Soviet-Afghan Treaty of February 1921, establishing friendly relations, was, in Druhe's opinion, a stepping-stone in preparation for a march of Roy's army on India while the institution of Soviet consular offices in a number of Afghan cities meant setting up "propaganda centres aimed against British India".[2] But, first, there was no "Roy's army" or "Roy's brigade" in existence either in 1920, or still less, in 1921, for, indeed, a hundred or even 200 Indian immigrants, who were divided into feuding groups and dispersed in various Soviet cities, were physically unable to form any military brigade. Second, where and when, and in what documents has Druhe found, or in what archives has he discovered so much as a hint at any Soviet propaganda against India? There has, indeed, been no end of it against British imperialism which oppressed India. But India and Britain are not exactly the same thing.

Druhe declared all the work done by Indian revolutionaries in Tashkent and other cities of Turkestan to have been directed towards preparing a Soviet invasion of India. He has labelled all Indian immigrants as a weapon of the Soviet Government which, he claimed, wanted to have enough "zealous Communists and good soldiers, so that the invasion would look like a true 'liberation' of India, and not as a conquest by Russia".[3] It is in the same light that he has treated even the arrival of *muhajirins* in Tashkent and the training of 15 of them at the propaganda school, and

[1] SACSA, s. 25025, r. 2, f. 2, pp. 2, 3, 4, etc.

the proclamation of the so-called Communist Party and, more particularly, of course, the setting up of military command courses which had between 20 and 40 men trained in the space of three to four months, and the joining of the Red Army by a small number of Indians who deserted the British forces which occupied North Iran. In actual reality, all of the facts just mentioned were pointers to the sweeping upsurge of the national liberation movement in India, and, notably, the rising number of revolutionary-minded Indians who were looking for more effective ways and means of a determined struggle against the British conquerors of India. Purely material aid along with assistance in terms of propaganda and military training which the Soviet people gave to Indian revolutionaries as well as to the revolutionaries of Iran, Turkey, Korea and China, were entirely in accord with the Soviet Government's commitment to an alliance with oppressed Oriental peoples in the name of a common struggle against a common enemy—international imperialism. This common struggle is known to have become a reality and to be expressed in the full-scale participation of Chinese, Korean, Iranian, Turkish, and, partly, Indian citizens in action against the invaders, the *basmach* bands and the Whiteguards. And, of course, contrary to the allegations of Druhe, Samra, Bandyopadhyaya and others, none of it had anything whatsoever to do with preparing a land-grabbing march on India or on any other Oriental country.

Both Druhe and Samra considered that the struggle of the Bolsheviks to free Central Asia from the *basmach* bands and invading forces were the key element of preparations for the conquest of India. These authors quoted an order of the day by G. Ya. Sokolnikov, the then Commander of the Turkestan Front, which he signed on October 10, 1920, in connection with the dispatch of a military unit to the Pamirs and interpreted the words of that document as proof of Soviet Russia's aggressive designs against India. Here is an extract from that order of the day,[1] as Chattar Samra quoted it: "Comrades of the Pamir Division, you have been given a responsible task. The Soviet Republic sends you to garrison the posts on the Pamirs on the frontiers of the

[1] What Samra described as the order of the day was the speech made by G. Ya. Sokolnikov in front of the unit setting off for the Pamirs.

friendly countries of Afghanistan and India. The Pamirs tableland divides revolutionary Russia from India (which has a population of three hundred million subjugated by a handful of Englishmen). On this tableland you, the signallers of the revolution, must hoist the red flag of the army of liberation. May the peoples of India, who fight against their English oppressors, soon know that friendly help is not off."[1] The movement of a Soviet unit to the Soviet Pamirs was a natural and legitimate measure because national frontiers had to be guarded, all the more so since there was somebody to guard them against.[2] It is just as natural that the advance of the Red Army towards India's northern borders, inhabited by bellicose tribes that had rebelled against British domination more than once, was a factor which revolutionised the oppressed and, of course, worried Britain. That, however, was a perfectly objective circumstance arising from the very nature of the Soviet system of government. That is exactly what Sokolnikov spoke about. Now, if you turn to his statement about Soviet Russia's readiness to help the Indian people, everything in this sense depended on the desire of the Indians themselves and did not attest to an intention to organise any march on the subcontinent in order to conquer it.

Druhe also maintains that it was Lenin himself who proclaimed that "the road to London and Paris lay through Peking and Calcutta",[3] but Lenin never said anything like that, and so the author does not, nor could he, name chapter and verse to indicate where one could read this phrase because these or similar words belong to Trotsky, not Lenin. On August 5, 1919, Trotsky approached the Central Committee of the RCP(B) with "a plan for creating a cavalry corps (30,000-40,000 riders) with the idea of launching it against India" so as to bring nearer the revolution in Europe. To support his plan, Trotsky wrote that "the road to Paris and London lies via the towns of Afghanistan, Punjab, and Bengal".[4] The RCP(B) Central Committee, with Lenin's

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[1] Chattar Singh Samra, *India and Anglo-Soviet Relations*..., pp. 52-53, and also David N. Druhe, *Soviet Russia and Indian Communism*..., p. 36.

[2] See: the text of the order of the day in the *Kommunist*, Baku, December 8, 1920, p. 2.

[3] David N. Druhe, *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

[4] See: *The Trotsky Papers 1917-1919*, Vol. I, Mouton and Co., London, 1964, p. 625.

active participation, turned down that adventuristic plan.[1]

That is perfectly true as far as the political education of Indian immigrants in Soviet Russia and their subsequent return to India are concerned. Yet what the work of that kind testified to was not the Red Army's preparations for the conquest of India, but the determination of the first Indian revolutionaries to tell their people the truth about Soviet Russia and so contribute towards revolutionising them, advancing the Communist movement, and radicalising the national liberation struggle at home. For that was, in fact, what they had come to Soviet Russia for.

The Soviet Government, by meeting the aspirations of the Indian immigrants and lending all-round assistance, including aid in terms of military instruction, to the revolutionaries of adjacent Oriental countries, was helping the peoples of Asia find the way to an alliance with Soviet Russia and, consequently, to national independence at the earliest opportunity. Moreover, it was thus defending itself from the invading armed forces of imperialism which used adjacent Asian countries as springboards from which to strike at Soviet Russia. That is to say that the arguments produced by Druhe and other authors who shared his view were groundless and betrayed their anti-Soviet bias, pure and simple.

Indian bourgeois historian Zafar Imam emphatically objected to Druhe's conception. He said that in spite of official declarations of the British authorities about the impending threat of an armed Russo-Afghan attack against India, a prominent member of the Congress characterised such allegations as a "clear lie concocted by our enemies to divert the attention of the nation from the goal on which it has fixed its gaze". Zafar Imam arrived at the following conclusion: "In 1920, no responsible Soviet leader, except perhaps Trotsky, seriously toyed with the idea of liberating India from British rule by army action."[2]

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[1] See: B. M. Leibson, "Lenin's Assessment of the Situation and Prospects for World Revolution" in *The Second Congress of the Comintern*, Moscow, 1972, p. 32 (in Russian).

[2] Zafar Imam, *Colonialism in East-West Relations*, pp. 143-147.

The Western Group of Indian National Revolutionaries in Moscow

In accordance with their plans, the first Indian Communists attempted to convoke an All-India Revolutionary Congress, although their leaders' left-sectarian position was in the way. The Indian National Congress was virtually kept out of a possible coalition of anti-imperialist forces. There was some hope for unity of action to be established with nationalist revolutionaries who had been in Europe for years.

As early as October or November 1920, the Roy group began to correspond with them. Late in November, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya even arrived in Moscow for preliminary discussions, as did Mukherji who had come over from Tashkent.[1] It must have been at that moment that they agreed on holding a conference in the summer of 1921. However, the conflict situation which had arisen in Tashkent is known to have led to the leaders of the two feuding groups—M. N. Roy and his wife Evelyn Trent-Roy, on the one hand, and Prativadi Acharya, and Abdur Rabb Barq, on the other, coming to Moscow as early as January 1921.

The Comintern tried to reconcile the contending parties and, in the hope that it would succeed in doing so, invited also representatives of the Indian revolutionaries in Western Europe to come over to Moscow as well. Its intention was to help the Indian Communists hold what was the long-planned conference of revolutionaries. The appropriate decision of the Small Bureau of the Comintern on that invitation was taken on April 5, 1921, and the Indians arrived in Moscow either late in April or early in May.[2]

The group consisted of seven revolutionaries: Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, Luhani, Pandurang Khankhoje, Bhupendranath Dutta, Nalini Gupta, Abdul Hasan and American woman Agnes Smedley, at that time Chattopadhyaya's

[1] On September 30, 1920, Mukherji was still in Baku where he had been staying for some time after the First Congress of the Peoples of the East (see: ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 33, p. 8).

[2] The date of the Berlin group's arrival in Moscow can be established by the following facts: in one of the collective letters, dated July 8, 1921, to the Small Bureau of the Comintern, the members of the group wrote that they had "arrived in Moscow about nine weeks ago". A report of August 4, 1921 from the Comintern's Turkestan Bureau said that "the members of the Berlin Revolutionary Committee have been in Moscow for over three months".

wife, who had worked with Indian revolutionary immigrants on the US East Coast for six years.[1] Nearly all the newcomers had until recently been either members or staffers of the Indian National Committee in Berlin organised at the beginning of World War I. But now some already considered themselves Communists, while others still were no more than Marxist sympathisers. However, having started to move towards Marxism, following the failure of their own ideological and tactical precepts, and intensified liberation struggle of the Indian people, and under the growing impact of the October Revolution, they were still far from completing that transition. Declaring themselves to be anxious to join the Communist movement, they brought into it, as Lenin put it, "their prejudices, their reactionary fantasies, their weaknesses and errors".[2] Their outlook of the day, although they had accepted some tenets of Marxism, represented nothing but a stepping-stone on the way to scientific Socialism.

Three members of the group, Chattopadhyaya, Luhani and Khankhoje, who may have come nearer than anybody else around them to accepting Marxism, set forth their political platform in lengthy 14-page Theses on India and the World Revolution. They sent that document to Lenin and the ECCI.[3] Like many national revolutionaries, the

[1] In a letter of August 5, 1921 to the Small Bureau of the Comintern ("To the Small Bureau of the Comintern", pp. 1-8) Agnes Smedley, writing about her legal and underground work with Indian immigrants in the US and the object of the Indians' arrival in Moscow, said: "Our work (in the US) included: the legal defense of ourselves and others against deportation to India following terms of imprisonment; propaganda in America regarding India; ... the shipment to India of vast amounts of revolutionary literature regarding India and Soviet Russia; the sending of guns to India by smuggling them with Indian seamen... I myself am an I. W. W., and up to 1918 a member of the American Socialist Party. I am not a member of any Communist Party. I left the US in December 1920, en route to India to carry on certain work. As a stewardess I came to Germany, joined the Indian Revolutionary Committee and *came to Russia with them with the hopes that we might first organise the Indian revolutionary movement on an international scale* (italics added—*M. P.*). I make this statement as an Indian revolutionary worker, as one who will proceed shortly to India, where I expect to spend my life" (see also A. Smedley's autobiographical short novel *The Daughter of the Land*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1931).

[2] V. I. Lenin, "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up", *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, 1964, p. 356.

[3] R. Yunitskaya maintains in her article "Lenin and Indian Revolutionaries" (*Azia i Afrika segodnya*, No. 4, 1966, p. 26) that the

authors of the Theses, exaggerated India's importance for the world revolution out of all proportion by claiming that in this sense "India transcends other parts of the Asiatic and African continents". At the same time, the Theses contained a perfectly justified statement of protest against the "left" Communists' unscientifically optimistic evaluations of India's social and economic position made in "the cloudy atmosphere of vague enthusiasm" (p. 1).

The authors rightfully emphasised the plural structure of the Indian economy which made it specific and difficult to study. "In contemporary India," they wrote, "feudalism, mediaeval guild-organisation of small industry and modern large-scale industrialism exist side by side in a curious medley" (p. 2).

The authors accepted Marx's theory of classes and class struggle. They wrote: "Indian society, like societies everywhere, has been ... divided along horizontal lines of cleavage between the exploiting and exploited classes." However, the peculiar thing is that these lines of horizontal cleavage have been intersected, from the very inception of India's history, by vertical lines of social and religious division producing additional antagonisms in society (p. 4).

Describing the class composition of Indian society, the authors pointed out, first and foremost, the immense preponderance of small-scale landowning peasantry. It was stated in the Theses that in India "there is a huge petty-bourgeois agricultural population, traditionally fixed in its individualist method of agriculture" (p. 2).

With reference to the industrial proletariat, it was said that it was underorganised and did not go, in its struggle, beyond demanding higher pay and a shorter working day. The authors arrived at the conclusion that the Indian proletariat could by no means be regarded as class-conscious and that it was very difficult to overcome its backwardness, ignorance and conservatism cultivated by the caste system and religious antagonism. It was pointed out that rank-and-file workers were completely illiterate and that it was impossible, as a matter of fact, to do propaganda among them by the printed word (p. 3.)

But it was the British bourgeois domination of Indian

Indians had sent their theses to Lenin on July 7, 1921. But, evidently that might not have happened before early August, for the document closed with this note: "Moscow, July-August 1921."

society that the authors of the Theses rightfully regarded as the major obstacle in the way of the proletariat's class self-determination. "Wherever there has been a politically unfree country, its exploited classes," the Theses said, "have not been able to come to clear perception of the existence and nature of the class struggle..." (p. 7). Concluding this part of their theorising, the authors contended that "the Indian proletariat can take its rightful place in the ranks of the World-proletariat in its struggle against the bourgeoisie only after the supervening British Imperialism has been withdrawn" (p. 8).

In another document, the so-called Memorandum (August 4, 1921) to the Indian Commission of the Comintern, Chattopadhyaya and Luhani elaborated on the same subject: "The Indian environment is today loaded," they wrote, "with the superfluous element of British Imperialism. Eliminate this element and you make class-consciousness [of the proletariat] clear and acute."

However, the Theses did not condemn the Indian proletariat to waiting, inactively, for British imperialism to be driven out of India so as to get down, only afterwards, to fighting for its class self-determination. The Theses said that the task before the Comintern was to arrange for "an intensive propaganda and organisational work in India and the East generally to awaken the Oriental proletariat to revolutionary class-consciousness, so that its advance-guard may not only be an important factor in political liberation, but may also be prepared to seize power" (p. 12). That is how the authors came to moot the question of creating the Indian Communist Party, as the proletarian vanguard. This question was not elaborated in the Theses, however, but was considered in the Memorandum.

The authors strongly and emphatically objected to the Communist Party created by Roy for it consisted of men most of whom were "communist only in intention" and "without any clear idea as to all that is involved in the communist orientation" and, generally speaking, "a party formed in Europe and imposed on the proletariat of India is an unnatural process of bringing into being a party organism". The authors believed that the only right way to follow was for a class-conscious section of the proletariat of India to form a party on its own. But, the Memorandum said, "a class-conscious section of the proletariat of India does not exist" and therefore for the time being

"any talk of an Indian Communist Party is premature". The authors of the Memorandum believed that one specific task before the Comintern was to create an apparatus for propaganda and organised Communist work in India proper and so "lay the foundations of the future Communist Party of India". They believed that in the long run this "concrete apparatus for such propaganda and organisation would naturally appear to be an Indian Communist Party". So the authors of the Theses and the Memorandum must have known the Marxian argument that Socialist ideology has to be infused into the working class from without and that the proletariat cannot, for a variety of reasons, work out Socialist consciousness by itself. Nevertheless, they rejected the conclusions that followed therefrom: first, that the Communist Party can, at first, be made up only of a relatively small number of Communist-minded intellectuals, second, that subsequently it is to become a major factor in connecting the working-class movement with Socialism and develop, step by step, into a genuinely proletarian party. While correctly criticising Roy for being overhasty and for disregarding the fact that there was no reason to declare a single, very small group of Communists to be the Communist Party of India, they fell into another extreme by actually shelving indefinitely the job of making organisational and political preparations for launching the party.

The Theses upheld the idea of "collaborating with bourgeois-democratic and national revolutionary movements of political liberation in the East". The authors roundly criticised the "left" Communists who objected to cooperation with the national bourgeoisie for they feared it could come to power. "More academic objections on rigid communist grounds," the Theses said, "show a pathetic and stupid detachment from *realpolitik* of the World-situation" (p. 13).

Yet, for all that, the Theses did not call for preserving and strengthening the Communists' organisational and political independence, for the authors of the document evidently believed that the deliverance of India from British oppression would objectively be equivalent to a Socialist revolution. "Any danger of the Indian bourgeoisie getting down to the exploitation of the Indian proletariat as the result of the overthrow of the British Empire is entirely out of the question," they wrote (p. 13). There was a rather involved system of arguments designed to justify this idea.

The Theses maintained that British imperialism was so powerful, economically and politically, as to be, properly speaking, world capitalism by itself. "It can almost be said that World-capitalism is synonymous with British capitalism," it was pointed out in the Theses (p. 9). And since India was fundamental to the existence and power of British imperialism, consequently, the liberation of India from foreign domination would mean the destruction not only of England but of the entire world system of imperialism. That is just what the authors of the Theses said: "In the event of the destruction of British imperialism, World-capitalism would be shattered to pieces." And after that, the weak Indian bourgeoisie would be unable to hold on and would be swept away by the world proletarian revolution. "The Indian bourgeoisie, numerically insignificant ... will not be able to make any stand against the irresistible march of proletarian revolt all over the World" (pp. 13, 14).

The argument about the decisive role of the East in the world proletarian revolution, most widespread among the early Communists of Asia, was quite distinct in this document, too. It stressed, in particular, the nationalistic ideas which overplayed India's role in the world revolutionary process.

One important element in the philosophy of Indian national revolutionaries who were on their way to accepting Marxism-Leninism was their understanding and recognition of the role of Soviet Russia as the "world-revolutionary centre", which had to be preserved and strengthened (pp. 12, 13) and which was crucial to the liberation movement in the East.

Characterising the political positions of the Indian national revolutionaries, Agnes Smedley pointed out that "everywhere" among them "there is a universal desire for cooperation with Soviet Russia" and that "they have defended Soviet Russia in every possible way". Yet their internationalism was limited.

Chattopadhyaya and his two comrades sought to prove in their Theses that it was impossible for the working class of the advanced nations of Europe and America to achieve unity with the proletariat of the Asian and African continents. They wrote that "to base the tactics of the proletarian World-revolution on the hypothesis of the international solidarity of the World-proletariat is an idle pre-occupation with an imaginary state of things" (p. 12). They

proceeded from the conviction that imperialism turned a considerable section of the proletarians of its countries into the accomplices in the exploitation of the East for it endowed the working-class aristocracy with a share of the surplus-value derived from the colonial countries.

In their opinion, the British proletariat was particularly perverted, and was a force hostile to the Indian people. "The British proletariat," they maintained in the Theses, "may and does rise to a sense of solidarity with the proletariat of continental Europe, but with the wretched proletariat of England's Asiatic and African dependencies the British working classes have no sense of solidarity" (pp. 11, 12). In this respect, Chattopadhyaya, Khankhoje and Luhani were no different at all from the rest of national revolutionaries. Agnes Smedley wrote that "the viewpoint of the Indian national revolutionaries is opposed to any work with any English party, Communist or otherwise. Every English person to them is either an enemy or a potential enemy."[1] They made an absolute notion of the trend Lenin had detected for the top crust of the working class and its party, trade union and social democratic officialdom to turn bourgeois, and they extended it to the entire working class of Europe and the US which was wrong, in the first place.

By all appearances, Chattopadhyaya and his comrades did not yet accept the organisational principles of the Communist movement either, upholding the independence and autonomy of the whole group which had come over from Europe, although it was politically heterogeneous, and ruled out the very possibility of joining M. N. Roy's group.[2]

The views of Chattopadhyaya's group are of a considerable interest because they were typical of the Indian national revolutionaries advancing to Marxism.

In his reply to the authors of the Theses, Lenin wrote in July 1921: "I have read your Theses with great interest. But why the new theses? I shall soon talk with you about that".[3] Lenin does not seem to have had a chance to talk

[1] "To the Small Bureau of the Comintern", p. 4.

[2] "Report About the Indian Nationalist Group in Moscow".

[3] Quoted from: R. Yunitskaya, "Lenin and Indian Revolutionaries", p. 26. A different text of Lenin's reply can be found in the *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol. 1, p. 255: "Dear Comrade Chattopadhyaya, I have read your theses. I agree with you. British imperialism must be destroyed. When I can meet you, will be communicated to you by my secretary."

with that group of Indians,[1] in any case nothing is known about the substance of such a conversation even if it did take place. Yet one can easily imagine what Lenin's criticism of that document was like. Chattopadhyaya and his comrades did not accept in full Marx's theory of classes and the class struggle. They held it to be effective only within limited national boundaries or, at the most, within the boundaries of the countries living under identical social and political conditions. They flatly rejected the class community of the proletariat on an international scale and, consequently, rejected the Marxist-Leninist slogan "Workers of All Countries and All Oppressed Peoples, Unite!"[2] They were inconsistent even in their limited understanding of the principle of the class struggle. While rightfully regarding national liberation as a top-priority task for the Indian people, they totally ignored the immediate interests of the working classes which were one of the important driving forces in the battle for independence.

However, the scale and success of the liberation movement depended on whether any objectives of agrarian or other social reforms to the benefit of the people were set as it developed. Chattopadhyaya, Khankhoje and Luhani never set such objectives and, by the same token, objectively remained committed in this matter to the bourgeois nationalist wing of the liberation movement of India.

Lenin strove to show the Indian national revolutionaries the right way to follow. "But why the new theses?" he asked his correspondents, intimating that there were the old

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This version of the reply, which I had earlier declared "improbable" (see: M. A. Persits, *India's Revolutionaries in Soviet Russia...*, Moscow, 1973, p. 78—in Russian), now appears to me to be quite possible and not contradicting what R. Yunitskaya quoted. Properly speaking, what is it that Lenin jotted down in his note, what did he agree with? He wrote that he had read the theses and agreed with them —British imperialism must be destroyed. That is all he agreed with; as to the other problems, he was willing to talk about them in person. It is quite possible also that there were two replies from Lenin—one common reply addressed to all the three authors together, quoted by R. Yunitskaya, and another, addressed to Chattopadhyaya personally, quoted by the Indian *Documents of the History...*

[1] Opinions on this score differ. Besides R. Yunitskaya's article I agree with, see also: L. V. Mitrokhin, *India on Lenin*, p. 115 (in Russian).

[2] See: V. I. Lenin, "Speech Delivered at a Meeting of Activists of the Moscow Organisation of the RCP(B), December 6, 1920", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, 1974, p. 453.

ones, adopted by the Second Congress of the Comintern, which they should have turned to.

A month later, Lenin expressed the same idea in no uncertain terms and went on to point up the need to take into account the interests of the peasantry whose movement was an important factor in the mounting struggle for the freedom of India. On receiving the new theses, on August 23, this time from Bhupendranath Dutta, about the essence and objectives of the Indian revolutionary movement, Lenin replied to him on August 26: "Dear Comrade Dutta, I have read your theses. We should not discuss about the social classes. I think we should abide by my theses on the colonial question. Gather statistical facts about peasant leagues if they exist in India."[1]

Dutta's theses appear to have also suffered from nationalism although they differed from the material of Chattopadhyaya, Luhani and Khankhoje by lengthy discourse about the classes of Indian society. Dutta sought to prove in his theses that as long as the foreign enemy dominated India, the various classes should work together to organise a political revolution against it.[2] Lenin was not satisfied, apparently, with the absolute and excessively nationalistic sense of that contention. By his reply, he called the Indians' attention to the fact that in the context of joint action by the various classes, the peasants, nevertheless, had their own particular interests which ought to be taken into account by revolutionaries, all the more so by those who wanted to become Communists.

Dutta himself related later on that it had never occurred to him, as a national revolutionary, that the peasant movement mattered anything for the struggle for national freedom. Lenin's remarks were a revelation to him, an eye-opener to let him see the actual ground for the liberation struggle and make him change his views on its ways and means.[3]

If Lenin criticised Roy and "left" Communists for being reluctant to reckon with the national character of the liber-

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[1] V. I. Lenin, "To Bhupendranath Dutta", *Collected Works*, Vol. 45, 1981, p. 270.

[2] For a brief summary of the theses, which I have had no first-hand experience of, see *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol. 1, p. 255.

[3] See: Bhupendranath Dutta, *Dialectics of Land-Economics of India*, Mohendra Publishing Committee, Calcutta, 1952, pp. III-IV.

ation movement in India and its leading force—the national bourgeoisie, he criticised the national revolutionaries, particularly those who were on their way to Marxism for the inconsistency and limitations of their class posture. Bhupendranath Dutta related in his book that Lenin, when receiving Kumar Mahendra Pratap, Mohammad Barakatullah, Prativadi Acharya and other Indians, told them: "Go back to India and preach class struggle, and the road to freedom of India will be nearer".[1]

The documents of Chattopadhyaya and his comrades just considered, contained, besides, quite a few elements of national limitations and petty-bourgeois extremes. This was to be seen, first and foremost, in an overstatement of the role of British imperialism. By presenting it as an embodiment of the entire world system of capitalism, the authors of the theses would usually alleviate the contradictions among the imperialist Powers and, consequently, failed to take them into account when devising the tactics of the liberation struggle. Second, they overplayed the role of the colonies, notably, of India, for the existence of imperialism. Third, the antecedent premise predetermined a misconception of India's decisive role for the world proletarian revolution. Finally, they belittled the economic and political potentialities of the national bourgeoisie, denied the possibility of it coming to power and, consequently, put an equals sign, as a matter of fact, between the national liberation and Socialist revolutions.

Abdur Rabb Barq nominally approved of the basic provisions of the theses of Chattopadhyaya and his comrades, but in a written policy statement of July 29, 1921 he stated what was essentially a familiar platform to us—one of national revolutionary character. Although he spoke and wrote about the Socialist trends of the Association, he denied the revolutionary capabilities of the Indian working class not only at present but also in the future. Demonstrating his failure to grasp the fundamental principles of Marxism, he proclaimed that "the real proletariat of India are those 'untouchables', the 'puriahs' who number nearly 53 million, who possess neither home nor hearth, have no caste, no religion, no history and no tradition. They

[1] Ibid., pp. III-IV. The author makes a mistake by claiming that Lenin received the Indian leaders, with M. Pratap at their head, in 1920. In reality, as noted above, this took place in July 1919.

are a class, and when class-conscious, shall constitute a terrible weapon against social enormities and all other classes in India. They are to gain everything and lose nothing by social revolution except their disabilities". He was opposed to the existence of the Indian Communist Party and tried to prove that it was inconceivable for Communists to work in the Indian conditions of the day. He argued that there were no true Communists in the Orient at all and that "ninety-nine percent of the avowed Communists of the East I have found to be nationalists at the bottom of their hearts and the majority of the remaining one per cent are charlatans, and adventurers".

In another statement, of May 8, 1921, Abdur Rabb Barq, adamantly insisted on the idea of the unity of the people of India, trying to prove that there was no bourgeoisie in the generally accepted sense of the term in that country, and whatever there was cooperated with the proletariat. (CPA IML.) Abdur Rabb Barq was opposed to social change in the interest of the working people. In a letter of June 26, 1921 to the Small Bureau of the Comintern, he emphasised that "our programme should not excite the enmity of the ruling classes or the landed proprietor class".[1]

Roy's attitude to the questions under consideration had not changed. He went on tenaciously upholding his left-sectarian views and even pressed for the Third Congress of the Comintern to consider and adopt his new theses on the Oriental question. The hidden object of Roy's document was to strike off Lenin's resolution on the national and colonial questions, passed by the Second Congress of the Comintern, at least for the Communists of such Eastern countries as India and China, alleged to have already become capitalist. Roy sought to corroborate the validity of his left-revolutionary conception which, in point of fact, implied setting an essentially Socialist aim for such countries as India and China. To that end, Roy charged the Comintern with considering the Eastern countries as "something uniform, and with everyone having identical problems". At the same time, Roy flatly refused to recognise the feudal and colonial community of these countries and the oneness of their major anti-imperialist goal. He tried hard to prove

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[1] "Indian Commission to the Small Bureau of the Comintern, June 26, 1921".

that all of them "differ strongly (from each other) in their political, economic, industrial and social conditions" and that, consequently, they "have different problems to resolve" before them.[1] This idea was expressed for the first time by M. N. Roy back in late 1920 when he spoke up against the First Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku. In a letter from Tashkent he declared that "the policy of convoking the Congress of the Peoples of the East is a big mistake, for the peoples of various countries of Asia are not following the same ways".

This argument was dishonest politically and wrong in substance. It was dishonest because neither Lenin nor the Comintern had ever viewed the countries of Asia as something uniform, as Roy had actually charged them with doing. On the contrary, Lenin taught the budding Communists that "...the unity of the international tactics of the communist working-class movement in all countries demands, not the elimination of variety or the suppression of national distinctions (which is a pipe-dream at present), but an application of the *fundamental* principles of communism ... which will *correctly modify* these principles in certain *particulars*, correctly adapt and apply them to national and national-state distinctions."[2] Roy's argument was wrong in the sense of being one-sided and because it ignored the objectively existing community of Oriental countries and played up nothing but distinctions chosen at random. The delegate of Chinese Communists to the Third Congress, Zhang Tailei, strongly objected to the neglect of the common things that brought the backward and "advanced" countries of the East together. In the theses submitted to the Eastern Commission of the Congress he wrote: "It is profoundly erroneous to maintain" that because of the existing differences between the development levels of Oriental countries, "the peoples that inhabit them have no common revolutionary tasks..."[3]

Yet another reason why Roy needed that argument was

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[1] M. N. Roy, "Draft Theses on the Oriental Question Presented to the Third Congress of the Comintern", *Narody Dalnego Vostoka*, Irkutsk, No. 3, 1921, p. 340.

[2] V. I. Lenin, "Left-Wing Communism—An Infantile Disorder", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, 1974, p. 92.

[3] Quoted from: B. Z. Shumyatsky, "From the History of the Young Communist League and the Communist Party of China", *Revolutsionny Vostok*, Nos. 4-5, 1928, p. 220.

because he wanted the Comintern to be less influenced by the grievous events which occurred in Iran and Turkey at the time arising from the leftism and voluntarism of the early Communists of those countries. Roy went out of his way to show that those events had nothing to do with India which, he argued, had achieved a far higher stage of social and economic development than Iran and Turkey. The events in question were serious enough, however. One thing that had become clear by that time was the tragic development of the Ghilan revolution which was a direct result of the left-sectarian tactics of Iran's first Communists. The spontaneous attempt of the first Turkish Communists to launch full-scale Communist Party activities in Turkey at once ended up in the bestial murder of Mustafa Subhi and his fifteen followers in January 1921. Acting in that way, M. Subhi and his group proceeded from the unripe and erroneous assessments of the situation as it obtained in Turkey. They exaggerated beyond all measure the degree of the revolutionary enthusiasm of the Turkish working people, and, what was particularly deplorable, of the Kemalist leaders. In a report on the work of the Central Bureau of the Turkish Communist Organisations (Baku) M. Subhi wrote in June or July 1920 that "in two or three months, the organisation will represent a powerful revolutionary force" and that the Kemalists would rather "prefer to see power handed over to the Turkish peasants and workers, i. e. clear the way for Bolshevism, to acccepting the oppression by European capitalist imperialists..."[1] In actual fact, the Kemalists had no alternative of this kind before them. And so they most ruthlessly did away with a group of leaders of what was an incipient Communist movement in that country.

Those heavy losses vindicated Lenin's policy of cooperation with *genuinely* revolutionary forces of the national liberation movement of Eastern countries and the need to overcome leftist guidelines and actions capable of *killing the revolutionary movement*, as Lenin put it.[2] The Ghilan events were a striking example to show how left revolutionaries were killing the revolution out of the most revolutionary considerations.

[1] SACSA, s. 110, r. 1, f. 69, p. 1.

[2] "If you follow the advice of the 'Left'," Lenin said, "you will kill the revolutionary movement" (quoted from: *Kommunist*, No. 14, 1969, p. 37).

The developments in the community of Indian revolutionaries in Moscow also attested to the danger of the left-sectarian policies which had interfered with the attempts at grouping the revolutionary forces of India. Lenin denounced Roy's leftist stand and called for cooperation of Communists with national revolutionaries. Lenin was well-informed of the substance of the disputes among the Indians. He received messages with political guidelines from the Indians of the Berlin group, and he had long known M. N. Roy's position, and, finally, on February 14, 1921, he received Abdur Rabb Barq to talk over the problems of the liberation of India. The head of the Indian Revolutionary Association criticised Roy's position and complained about his actions. Bhupendranath Dutta wrote about that conversation in one of his books subsequently, referring to a story told by Abdur Rabb Barq, who had summed up the conversation as follows: "Lenin insisted that Indian nationalists and Communists should work together."[1]

However, M. N. Roy stood pat on his left postulates and in the theses submitted to the Eastern Commission of the Third Congress of the Comintern he sought to prove the existence of developed capitalist countries among colonies, listing them as the most "advanced extra-European" states where the working people were fighting against capitalism because "feudalism has already been abolished there".[2]

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[1] Quoted from: Ye. Ya. Lyusternik, *Lenin and Some Aspects of the National Liberation Movement in India in 1918-1922—Lenin and the Problems of History of Asian Countries*, Leningrad University Press, Leningrad, 1970, p. 75 (in Russian).

[2] *Narody Dalnego Vostoka*, No. 3, 1921, pp. 339-340. The argument about the abolition of feudalism in India was subsequently elaborated on in M. N. Roy's and Mukherji's later works. Late in 1927, M. N. Roy came out in support of the so-called theory of decolonisation of India whereby British imperialism would have abandoned its earlier policy of suppressing national industry in India and set course towards encouraging the country's industrialisation. In this context, M. N. Roy maintained, there has emerged a sound economic foundation for the complete passage of the national bourgeoisie into the camp of reaction and for it to establish a political alliance with British imperialism. "The native bourgeoisie," M. N. Roy wrote, "grows not as an enemy of imperialism, it becomes its ally" (see: "The Role of the Bourgeoisie in the National Revolution", *The Masses of India*, No. 11, November 1927, p. 7).

That is to say that M. N. Roy's old argument that in India "feudalism has been destroyed by British imperialism" (see his article "Social Revolution in India" in the *Zhizn natsionalnostei* of October

In his opinion, "the fast developing proletariat, together with the large mass of landless peasants, is the only class to base a revolution on in an Oriental country like India."[1] The poorest peasantry was the only revolutionary class in backward countries. He argued that foreign domination in general could not be uprooted by the national liberation movement because it principally involved the national bourgeoisie only, while the large masses of working people did not support it since they were interested only in economic, that is, social liberation. "A movement that is led by the bourgeoisie," M. N. Roy wrote, "and is fed with bourgeois economic ideology, cannot lead the masses since it can by no means win their confidence" and "does not offer them a way out of their miserable existence". "It is impossible to unite the whole nation or even its sufficient

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10, 1920), was now logically brought off in the theory of decolonisation. "Now", M. N. Roy asserted ,"the unaccomplished part of the bourgeois revolution takes place in India also under the protection of British imperialism" (see: *The Masses of India*, No. 11, 1927, p. 6).

In his very interesting books of 1928 and 1929, Mukherji, critical though he was of the theory of decolonisation, actually enunciated the basic principles of Roy's conception. "British rule in India," he wrote, "has, consciously or unconsciously, led to the same consequences in India as a bourgeois revolution usually leads to...", that is, to the destruction of feudalism (see: Mukherji, *England and India*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1929, p. 151; idem. *Agrarian India*, Moscow, 1928, p. 142 —both in Russian). He tried to prove that the Indian proletariat was conscious enough already to lead the impending revolution with support from the peasantry which it has to win over (see: *England and India*, p. 342).

Mukherji declared the national bourgeoisie to be a reactionary force and held cooperation with it to be impossible (ibid., pp. 299, 340, 343). But in spite of that he admitted that "imperialism is in every way resisting the economic demands of the colonial bourgeoisie and compelling it to go along with the proletariat" (ibid., pp. 236-247).

Inspite of his own contention that the objectives of a bourgeois revolution in India had, as a matter of fact, been achieved already, he declared that a bourgeois-democratic revolution was the order of the day. But that was a purely formal statement. In actual fact, Mukherji plumped for a social revolution and passionately argued that India had to repeat the Russian experience exactly (ibid., pp. 340-341).

The positions of Mukherji, M. N. Roy and some of the latter's followers in the USSR were criticised in the early works of R. A. Ulyanovsky (see: "Opposing the Apology of the Colonial-Feudal Regime", *Revolutsionnyi Vostok*, No. 8, 1930, pp. 299-306, and his monograph under the pen-name of U. Roslavlev, *Agrarian Crisis in India*, Partizdat, Moscow, 1932, pp. 68-72—in Russian).

[1] *Narody Dalnego Vostoka*, No. 3, 1921, p. 341.

majority for such a movement",[1] M. N. Roy stressed again. Proceeding from that assumption, M. N. Roy called on the working people even of economically backward Eastern countries not to speak of such as China and India, to fight on two fronts at once—against foreign imperialism and national capitalism, that is, "native landlords and tradesmen".[2] His conclusion was not accepted by Zhang Tailei. He said in his own theses, in particular, that Roy's proposal was "totally wrong" as "such a formulation of tactical objectives is unacceptable not only to the economically backward countries of the Middle East but even to China which Comrade Roy sets down, not without reason, along with a special group of 'advanced' Eastern countries".[3]

Although Roy never said outright in his theses that a Socialist revolution was the order of the day in "advanced" Eastern countries, the whole substance of the document he had compiled brought the reader round to this conclusion.

Consequently, Roy's theses totally rejected the idea of a united anti-imperialist front, which was the essential point in the resolutions of the Second Congress of the Comintern on the national and colonial questions. The Eastern Commission of the Third Congress of the Comintern, which discussed Roy's theses turned them down. And, perhaps, wishing to emphasize that all the preceding resolutions of the Second Congress of the Comintern on the national and colonial questions were as valid as ever under the prevailing circumstances, decided not to pass any new resolution. M. N. Roy protested and, speaking at the plenary session of the Congress on July 12, declared that "such a decision is not correct and it is proper to change it". Roy called upon the Congress "to entrust the Eastern question once again to a properly constituted commission and consider it with all the seriousness it merits".[4] But this proposal was not accepted either.

So there was a heated debate on many aspects of the relation of national and social priorities for India between the

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[1] Ibid., p. 342.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Quoted from: B. Z. Shumyatsky, "From the History of the Young Communist League and the Communist Party of China", p. 222.

[4] *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol. 1, 1917-1922. Ed. by G. Adhikari, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1971, p. 267.

three groups of Indian revolutionaries meeting in Moscow before, during and after the Third Congress of the Comintern. Although they never actually gathered all together, they did nevertheless, set forth their political views quite definitely in their written statements for the Small Bureau of the Comintern and the Eastern Commission of the Congress, thus demonstrating wide divergencies of opinion between them. Naturally, the Indian Commission of the Comintern arrived at the conclusion that it was impossible to call the conference because of sharp differences not only on political, but on personal grounds as well.[1]

M. N. Roy's and his group's left-sectarian intransigence may be presumed to have been the main reason behind the Comintern's failure to rally the revolutionary anti-imperialist forces of the Indian immigrant community. However, the position of the Berlin group was also intractable. It would not accept the proclamation of the so-called Communist Party of India in Tashkent and the Roy group's dominant role in it. The Berlin group, apparently, claimed the same role and pressed for the Comintern to recognise it as a self-contained and organised unit. In a collective message to the Comintern, they wrote that they "have repeatedly addressed the Small Bureau and individual officials" of the International and that "the main question ... of the correspondence was our being recognised as a group..." Since, however, the Indian Commission appointed by the Small Bureau, "intends to deal with us not as a group but as individuals, we have refused to recognise [its] competence..."[2]

At the same time, the Moscow controversy among Indian revolutionaries played a positive part, all the more so since Lenin and the Comintern had actually participated in it. Lenin's instructions helped the Indian national revolutionaries understand the importance of the masses in the liberation struggle and subsequently brought many of them round to defending the interests of the working classes. Some of the national revolutionaries, who had already begun to pass over to Marxism-Leninism, speeded up their advance along that way.

Even the first Indian Communists, with M. N. Roy at

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[1] "Indian Commission to the Small Bureau of the Comintern", June, 26, 1921.

[2] Ibid.

their head, who persisted in their left-sectarian philosophies, had to reconsider their views on certain important issues by late 1921 and early 1922. Properly speaking, even Roy's theses for the Third Congress of the Comintern, although they developed his sectarian theories, could be seen to have certain positive points. M. N. Roy was no longer trying to prove that the European proletariat would not be able to overpower its bourgeoisie unless and until the Orient won its political freedom. All he was now saying, and rightly so, was that "the abolition of the monopoly right to exploit vast Eastern colonial possessions is an important factor for the eventual ... overthrow of the capitalist order of Europe".[1] Another point: "Until and unless the masses of the subject population take an active and conscious part in the revolutionary movement, foreign imperialism cannot and will not be overthrown only by the action of the bourgeoisie,"[2] is also correct.

M. N. Roy took quite an essential step towards a better understanding of Oriental realities in February 1922. In his report to a ECCI session on the political situation in India at the time, he actually went back on his earlier contention that the masses of the working people did not and could not participate in the movement of bourgeois nationalism. M. N. Roy had to admit that the so-called extremists of the Indian National Congress who wanted "to inspire the whole country with anti-British feeling ... have succeeded admirably. Except the rich landowning class, big capitalists and high government officials, the entire people of India, irrespective of class, is in a decidedly rebellious mood against British rule." And further on: "In spite of all its defects, the Non-Cooperation Movement within a few months' time has spread all over the country." [3]

That movement seems to have influenced M. N. Roy's assessment. Nevertheless, he still had not come to the conclusion about the need to create a united anti-imperialist front in India and said only that "now is the moment to organise these revolutionary forces into a powerful fighting apparatus in the shape of a centralised Party with a Program which will go beyond the overthrow of British rule, and

[1] *Narody Dalnego Vostoka*, No. 3, 1921, p. 339.
[2] Ibid., p. 342.
[3] *Present Political Situation in India* (*Report by M. N. Roy to the Executive Committee of the Communist International*), (ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 489, p. 5).

advocate economic betterment of the people".[1] M. N. Roy apparently saw it outside the National Congress about which he spoke in rather negative terms: "The Congress is neither a permanent political organisation nor does it reflect the views of certain political parties."[2]

As far as the building of the Communist party was concerned, it was not until they had run into big difficulties in trying to set it up in Tashkent and against strong resistance from the Berlin group in Moscow, that the first Indian Communists, as M. N. Roy said, subsequently, heeded at last "Lenin's cautioning words".[3] They switched their effort into the Marxist training of prospective Communists, dropped their idea of creating a Communist party immediately, and embarked on gradual and thorough preparations for it in India proper.

Although Roy did say in his report that the Communist Party of India had already been "created" and was, it is true, "very young" and had "to work illegally", he must have meant, however, nothing but the work of those first Communists who had returned from Soviet Russia and were working to form Communist groups in the country. And he rightfully hoped that in this work they would "find a footing in the ranks of the national Revolutionaries who, in their turn", he said, "are in touch with the mass movement and who represent the best intellectual leadership of the Indian movement".[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 4.
[2] Ibid., p. 5.
[3] *Report on Party Work in India and Organisational Plan*, Part 1, September 1925.
[4] *Present Political Situation in India...* (ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 489, p. 8).

In Lieu of Conclusion

The flow of hundreds of Indian national revolutionaries into Soviet Russia, along with large number of people from embattled Asia and, more particularly, the rise of Communist elements among them were all clear pointers to the revolutionising impact of the Great October Revolution on the oppressed East.

Thanks to the October Revolution, the peoples of India and of other Asian countries got a true friend and powerful ally in the shape of the Soviet state in their struggle against foreign imperialism and for national independence. Indeed, the ways of the Indian Revolution (and, in fact, not of Indian alone) began to pass through the Land of Soviets following the October Revolution of 1917. This country was the meeting place of ideologically and potilically heterogeneous fighters for the liberation of the East from imperialist oppression: national revolutionaries, revolutionary democrats, and those of them who were on their way to accepting Marxism and, finally, those who had already declared themselves to be Communists.

The presence of Indian and other Asian revolutionaries in Soviet Russia, their revolutionary activities directed towards the liberation of their countries from imperialist domination and the aid they received from the Soviet authorities and the Bolshevik Party were all clear expressions of the fighting and political alliance that was shaping up between the Russian proletarian revolution and the national liberation movements of India and the rest of the East. That fighting alliance, without any treaties or agreements to formalise it, was, however, a practical thing which sub-

sequently played its positive part in the victory of the liberation struggle of many oppressed peoples, including the Indian people.

Soviet Russia became a real school of revolution, a school of Marxism-Leninism for all Eastern, notably Indian, revolutionaries who stayed in it, and their teachers were Lenin, the Comintern, many Soviet Communists and Soviet realities in general.

Perhaps, no other Oriental nation received so much of Lenin's attention as India did. And hardly had the revolutionaries of any other Asian country happened to talk so many times with Lenin and listen to him, as did those of India. Lenin showed special interest in India and, in a note of November 14, 1921, he called on Soviet Party workers to see that there were "...*more* publications of Indian comrades in order to encourage them and to collect more information about India and her revolutionary movement".[1]

Contact with Lenin and people of the Comintern, Communists and other Soviet people was a turning point for many Indian national revolutionaries in changing their world outlook from revolutionary petty-bourgeois nationalism to Marxism. Many Indian national revolutionaries became Communists while they were in Soviet Russia, and many others did so after leaving it. For instance, Chattopadhyaya (1880-1937), after leaving Moscow at the end of 1921, came back, already a Communist, a few years later to stay in the Soviet Union for ever. Others, although they arrived in the Soviet Republic calling themselves Communists, fully developed as such only in this country. Some never accepted Marxism in its totality but, as a result of their sojourn in the Soviet Republic, they substantially evolved leftwards, expanding their outlook to include such important elements as recognition of classes and the class struggle, of the decisive role of the working people in the liberation movement, and the necessity of making social change in favour of the proletariat and the peasantry even during a bourgeois democratic revolution.

One typical case in point is that of Bhupendranath Dutta who said that when he returned from Moscow to Berlin after having had his theses criticised by Lenin, he called on the Indian National Congress to support the working-class and

[1] V. I. Lenin, "To N. I. Bukharin", *Collected Works*, Vol. 45, 1981, p. 376.

peasant movement in India. And when he went back home in 1925, he got down to defending the cause of workers and peasants.[1]

The Communist movement in India, just as in the Eastern countries adjacent to Soviet Russia, had three major distinguishing features. First, it emerged in the countries which were at a pre-capitalist stage of development still, and therefore, it had no mass base adequate to it as yet in the shape of the advanced struggle of the working class. In other words, the Communist movement in India, as well as in China, Korea, Turkey, Iran, which reflected the class requirements of the working-class movement, still in its infancy, sprang up within the broad framework of the national liberation struggle which had been developing for a long time by then and achieved a particularly high degree of intensity under the impact of the October Revolution.

Herein lies one of the causes behind the peculiar, yet logical situation: petty-bourgeois intellectuals, coming from the midst of national revolutionaries, played an especially great, even major role among the pioneers of the Communist movement of India along with INC left-wingers and trade unionists. Once convinced of the futility of their earlier commitment to individual terrorism and conspiracy, national revolutionaries turned to Marxism which had attracted them by its anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist message.

That applies not only to the Indian revolutionaries. Generally speaking, petty-bourgeois exponents of revolutionary nationalism and revolutionary democracy (variously from country to country) were logically attracted to Marxism by a totality of real factors: first, by their own radical anti-imperialism and anti-despotism; second, inevitable failure of their conspiratorial and other methods of struggle, ignoring the mass movement of the working people; third, the influence of the success of the international working-class and Communist movement particularly manifest in the victory of the Great October Revolution and in the process of Soviet political development.

In that particular historical setting, it was quite natural for the national revolutionary and revolutionary democratic intellectuals in Oriental countries to produce the first Com-

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[1] Bhupendranath Dutta, *Dialectics of Land-Economics of India*, p. IV.

munists and form the first Communist groups which initiated the Communist movement. The working class joined the Communist movement at a later stage, which was as natural as the fact that it is not the proletariat itself that produces Socialist ideology, but this ideology is brought in from without. That is how it was in actual practice, and not only in India but in other countries where the proletariat was just in the making, where it was still weak and had not yet developed well enough to start fighting for a Socialist perspective. This makes it evident how utterly inconsistent and utterly unscientific are the claims of bourgeois historiography about Oriental Communist movements having no national ground of their own and being artificially implanted there by Moscow and the Comintern since the Asian proletariat could not yet be ready, nor was it ready for such a movement. The actual record of history, which many bourgeois authors distort, is there to testify against them. The emergence of the Communist movement in all colonial Eastern countries precedes the conversion of the proletariat into a "class for itself". Consequently, it was not an advanced struggle of the working class (there was none as yet), but the sweeping national liberation movement that due to its anti-imperialism and the influence of the October Revolution, gave rise to the Communist movement of the East. It aquired its adequate basis later, in the form of a class-conscious movement of the proletariat.

The petty-bourgeois origin of many of the first Communists of India and other Eastern countries led to their outlook retaining some relics of revolutionary nationalism for quite a long time. This involved, besides, some essential difficulties of their ideological evolution, notably, the widespread infantile disorder of "leftism" among the first Communists of Asia.

Secondly, the Communist movement of India and other Oriental countries contiguous to Soviet Russia sprang from two streams of almost simultaneous origin—in exile and at home—merging into one after years of effective convergence to form the integrated Communist parties of their respective countries.

In 1918-1921, peoples from the oppressed East in Soviet Russia developed a Communist movement, forming national Communist groups. Many Easterners joined the RCP(B). In October 1920, Indian revolutionaries in exile formed a group which declared itself to be the Communist Party

of India. Eastern Communist groups in Soviet Russia and revolutionary elements in Asian countries established and maintained effective two-way communication. It was all the easier for them to do so due to the progressive repatriation of Eastern working people by the Soviet authorities and all manner of assistance they lent to Eastern revolutionaries anxious to come and coming to Russia. Both in Russia and in their own countries, the first Eastern Communists made preparations to convene the foundation congresses of their national Communist Parties. That is to say, the Communist movement that had arisen among the Easterners in the Soviet Republic was an important element in the making of national Communist parties, which went on almost simultaneously in Asian countries themselves—India, China, Iran, Turkey, and Korea.

Finally, the Soviet Communists did their best to help lay the ground for the Communist movement in India, China, Turkey, Iran and Korea. As true internationalists, they conducted revolutionary propaganda and organising work among Oriental nationals resident in Soviet Russia. That went far towards increasing the objective influence of the Great October Revolution on scores of thousands of Oriental nationals, Indians among them, in particular. By propagating the ideas of Socialism and anti-colonialism, the Bolsheviks contributed towards marshalling the revolutionary forces of Asia and coalescing them into Communist groups. That work was done by specialised political agencies of the RCP(B) and the Comintern in Tashkent (the Council for International Propaganda in the East, and then the Turkestan Bureau of the Comintern, Baku (the Council for Propaganda and Action), Irkutsk (Eastern Peoples Section of the Siberian Bureau of the Central Committee of the RCP(B), and subsequently the Far Eastern Secretariat of the Comintern), and Odessa (the Eastern Department of the Provincial Party Committee), that is, in places of the greatest concentration of Chinese, Korean, Turkish, Iranian and Indian working men. Lenin said at the Eighth Party Congress that the propaganda conducted by the RCP(B) Central Committee among foreign nationals in Russia was an important element in the making of many national Communist parties and of the Communist International itself.[1]

[1] See: V. I. Lenin, "Eighth Congress of the RCP(B), March 18-23, 1919", *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, 1977, p. 161.

One distinguishing feature of the opening stages of the Communist movement in India, just as in other Oriental countries contiguous to Russia, was the wide currency of left-sectarian ideas and actions. M. N. Roy was their most typical and tenacious exponent.

The early Indian Communists exhibited the "infantile disorder of 'leftism'" by their self-willed assessments of the social and political conditions in India, by advancing a number of unscientific propositions and by many unjustified actions.

M. N. Roy and his group regarded India as a capitalist country, after all, if a backward one, which had to go through a Socialist, rather than bourgeois-democratic, revolution. It was a Socialist revolution alone, they reasoned, that was to bring national independence to India as a by-product of the solution of the fundamental problems of the social liberation of the working people. Therefore, they considered the demand of the "right of nations to self-determination" to be an expression of the limited objectives of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, a purely bourgeois slogan of no interest to the Indian proletariat. The early Communists of other Oriental countries contiguous to Russia, were also obsessed with self-will and leftism, held nothing but a Socialist revolution, not a bourgeois-democratic one, to be their top priority, denied the anti-imperialist potentialities of the national bourgeoisie and, on that account, found it impossible for the Communists to collaborate with its parties. This is, apparently, the kind of mistake that Lenin had in mind when he pointed out that "...the 'Left Communists', however, do not give the slightest indication that they understand the significance of the question of the balance of forces."[1]

By what they said, Roy and his group, as well as the first Communists of Iran, Turkey, and China showed they overplayed the degree of the class consciousness of the proletariat of their respective countries, but by what they did they showed that they did not believe, nor could they, indeed, in its Socialist aspirations at that time, and, therefore, pinned all their hopes on the military factor which they considered to be of paramount importance for starting and advancing the revolution. The Indian Communists believed it possible

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[1] V. I. Lenin, "'Left-Wing' Childishness and the Petty-Bourgeois Mentality," *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, 1974, p. 332.

to even use mercenary troops made up of frontier tribes, still living under a clannish system, as a force capable of preparing the conditions for a Socialist revolution in India; the first Communists of Iran were ready to use the detachments of some feudal khans for overthrowing the tyranny of the shah, if they happened to be in opposition to the central authorities at an appropriate moment. But, basically, the Iranian Communists expected to put together revolutionary armies of pauperised elements, while the early Communists of China hoped to do so with roving bandits.

The notions of the decisive role of the military factor in a revolution arose not only from the actual weakness of the Oriental proletariat and its class movement, but also from the distinct military character of the major events of the day which strongly influenced the Indian and other budding Marxists of Asian countries. The specific conditions of each Asian country in particular added more substance to those notions. They were readily accepted by the first Indian Communists as a major element of the tactics of the national revolutionaries. The early Chinese Communists developed similar views largely under the impact of endless intestine wars going on in that country with a host of mercenary armies and politically indifferent roving bands. That situation, in the opinion of what were politically immature Communists of China at the time, made it possible to create a mercenary or bandit squads and use them to seize political power so as to force blessings upon an ignorant and backward people who still did not know what they really wanted.

The situation the early Communists of Iran and Turkey found themselves in also prompted them to overrate the military factor in a revolution.

What marked off the political situation in Iran was not only the revolutionary movement in Ghilan which was up in arms against the Shah and the British occupation forces, but also the existence of numerous militarised khans ever up either for or against the central government and ruling their respective areas by force of arms. A national liberation movement was gathering momentum in Turkey. In 1920, it escalated into a war of independence against the forces of the Entente. The military factor became crucial to shaping that country's destiny as well.

The "left" Communists of India and a number of other

Oriental countries combined their underestimation of the organising and propaganda work among the masses with their naive belief in the omnipotence of the Communist programme; they thought it was enough to proclaim it to win over milions of working men. Besides, Indian Communists inordinately overstated the significance of their own country and its revolutionary struggle for the liberation of the international proletariat from the fetters of imperialism, thus exhibiting their nationalistic limitations.

There appears to be enough ground for believing the outlook of the early Indian Communists in exile to have been a form of transition from petty-bourgeois revolutionary nationalism to Marxism. This phenomenon seems to have been quite natural for backward India of those days, not to speak of other Eastern countries, just as it was natural, in the nineteenth century, for Germany in which, as Lenin said, "the prevailing views of the time were in fact transitional, mixed and eclectic, lying between petty-bourgeois and proletarian socialism".[1] That is, I think, why Lenin criticised those views so prudently and tactfully, without mentioning any names or trying to bend anybody else to his will by his own authority and interference, and without imposing any formulations which could not yet be accepted by the "left" because of their insufficient theoretical maturity. Lenin's criticism was intended to help the early Communists of India and other Oriental countries overcome the "left mistakes" and these "teething pains"[2] and adopt the positions of Marxism wholly and entirely.

The "infantile disorder of 'leftism'" in the Communist movement of Asia was caused by a number of objective factors. A backward social and economic order, undeveloped class struggle and an incomplete class self-determination of the proletariat are, perhaps, the most essential of them. It must be these features, peculiar to Oriental societies, that made it particularly difficult for the early Indian and other Eastern Communists to grasp Marxist-Leninist theory.

The backwardness of Indian society was the common cause which produced not only the left outlook of the first Indian Communists, but also other of the just considered

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[1] V. I. Lenin, "Petty-Bourgeois and Proletarian Socialism", *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, 1965, p. 438.

[2] *Lenin Miscellany*, Vol. XXXVII, Politizdat, Moscow, 1970, p. 224 (in Russian).

ideological forms of transition of national revolutionaries from petty-bourgeois nationalism to Marxism.

Engels pointed out that the level of maturity of Socialist doctrines depended on the degree of development of the capitalist mode of production and the opposition between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. He wrote that "to the crude conditions of capitalist production and the crude class conditions corresponded crude theories".[1] Elaborating on that idea, Lenin pointed out that the backwardness of economic relations hampered the steeling of revolutionaries as Marxists who, under such circumstances, cannot make a determined break with the traditions of bourgeois-democratic world outlook.[2]

That was just what happened to the first Communists of India, weighed down by a burden of many years of commitment to the ideas of petty-bourgeois nationalist revolutionism. To overcome that ideology completely was a complicated thing, involving many difficulties.

One more reason behind "left" aberrations was the impatience of the early Asian Communists—natural under the circumstances of the day—in trying to carbon-copy the Russian revolution on their own national ground and so bring social emancipation, not just independence, to their own nation. It seemed unpardonable to start from scratch at home after the Russian experience had made it clear that only a Socialist revolution could really free the peoples.

Nobody in the Comintern saw the essence of the left errors of the early Eastern Communists as clearly as Lenin did, and nobody realised as clearly as he did how dangerous those errors were for the incipient Communist movement in the East. Lenin criticised the "leftist" ideas of Roy and other early Communists of Asia because they meant that the work of educating workers, peasants and intellectuals of Asian countries and that of speeding up the process of the differentiation of the proletariat from the bourgeoisie was to be replaced by a practice of commanding the masses and forcing them, by military methods, into accepting the slogans and addressing themselves to the tasks they could neither live up to nor support as yet.

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[1] Frederick Engels, "Socialism: "Utopian and Scientific" in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works* in three volumes, Volume Three, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1976, p. 119.

[2] See: V. I. Lenin, "Differences in the European Labour Movement," *Collected Works*, Vol. 16, 1963, p. 348.

The "infantile disorder of 'leftism'" exposed the Communist movement of India and other Oriental countries to the risk of total divorce from the masses and threatened to convert the Communist groups just in the making into isolated and powerless sects. The conflict situation that prevailed in the midst of the Indian revolutionary immigrants in Tashkent and Moscow at the time showed how real that threat was. Lenin worked with great caution and perseverance, producing thorough and systematic criticisms of the self-willed left-revolutionary precepts of the early Communists of the East and showing them to be injurious not only to the Communist movement but also to the national liberation movement in the colonial and dependent countries. In the rough outline of his report "On the International Situation and the Basic Tasks of the Communist International at the Second Congress of the Comintern", Lenin wrote: "Revolutionary movement in colonies and dependent nations. Left errors."[1]

In August 1921, Lenin stated that the world army of Communists "is still poorly trained and poorly organised." He said that, "submitting ourselves to a most careful and rigorons test, and studying the experience of our own movement, we must train this army efficiently; we must organise it properly..."[2] This appeal of Lenin's, addressed though it was to the German Communists, applied very well to those of the East who were organised and trained worse than anybody else. Lenin himself did amazingly much for the training and education of the budding Communists of the East, notably of India.

While in Soviet Russia, the early Oriental Communists had an ample opportunity not only to study Lenin's works but to talk to, and correspond with Lenin. In that way they learned how to define their own programmes and base their own activities on the scientific knowledge of the life of the peoples of Asia and a Marxist understanding of social processes, rather than on the shaky ground of self-willed revolutionism.

Under the influence of Lenin's criticisms, the emergent Communist movement of India began to cure itself, if very slowly, from the "left" disorder, and as it made progress

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[1] *Lenin Miscellany*, Vol. XXXVII, p. 226.

[2] V. I. Lenin, "A Letter to the German Communists", *Collected Works*, Vol. 32, 1965, p. 520.

in that sense, the Communist Party of India, which was not established, in fact, until 1925, began to develop stability and earn the support of the great mass of the working people of its country. Shrinavas Gangadhar Sardesai aptly and vividly defined the importance of the October Revolution and Lenin's activities for the Indian revolutionaries in general and for the Communists, who had now become an important factor of all Indian public life in particular: "And if history is to be written honestly and truthfully, if the purpose of history is to reveal truth and not to hide or distort it," he pointed out, "it is clear beyond doubt that we, in India, owe a deep debt to Lenin, the Russian revolution and the Soviet Union for the churning up of our hearts and minds that took place in that period."[1]

The record of the early period of Indian revolutionary immigrant activities in Soviet Russia in the years immediately following 1917 is a peculiar and striking manifestation of the impact the October Revolution had on India's social development.

There was one more important aspect of the Indian revolutionaries' stay in Soviet Russia. Their close contact with the people and the authorities of the workers' and peasants' state produced a friendship inspired by the common objectives of ridding the world of imperialist oppression. The Soviet Government and people accorded the Indians their wholehearted hospitality and gave them material aid and moral support, offering to them the facilities to study at all kinds of schools and special courses, and helped the Indians train revolutionaries equipped with the theory of Marxism-Leninism. Soviet people were sincerely anxious to help the Indians in their hard battles to liberate their native land from British domination.

On the other hand, the Indians, now having first-hand experience of the actual state of affairs in the workers' and peasants' state, lent their effective support to the Soviet Government more than once, showing themselves to be increasingly aware of the sum and substance of the October Revolution and of its importance for the liberation of India.

Many Indian soldiers in the British occupation forces in Iran refused to fight against the Red Army when it, together with the Persian military units raised in Turkestan, struck at the Whiteguards and British units entrenched in

[1] S. G. Sardesai, *India and the Russian Revolution*, Communist Party Publication, New Delhi, 1967, p. 73.

the town of Enzeli, in May 1920. Hundreds of Indians defected to the Red Army. Iranian Communists were even on the point of setting them up as a special Indian "Communist detachment" and taught them the ABC of politics.[1]

Some of the Indian revolutionary immigrants in the Soviet Republic and large groups of Chinese, Koreans, Iranians and Turks fought, arms in hand, with the Red Army against the *basmach* bands, Whiteguards and foreign invaders.

The Indian revolutionaries defended the Soviet system of government against invectives of imperialism, spread the truth about its liberating mission, and the first achievements and advantages it had brought to the peoples of Russia. That is to say, they contributed towards strengthening the Soviet state's moral and political prestige. It is well worth recalling in this context the statement made by Indian Communist Saklatvala, member of British Parliament, in the House of Commons on July 9, 1925. In his speech he exposed the colonialist record of British imperialism in India and set off the liberating mission of the October Revolution in Russia against it. "You say," he declared, "you are the trustees of the people. You have had 150 years and today you say ... that the education of the villager in India is impossible and that they are not to think that the population of India is like the population of Great Britain.

"...Our Russian Bolshevist friends have in five years' time been able to give the political franchise to the agriculturists of Russia, who are a class parallel with the agriculturist population of India. They are also people of diverse religions, including Mahommedans, Jews, Greek Church people, and others. The Bolshevists have been able to give them education in five years, yet in the Tsar's days these people were treated with the same callousness and brutal cruelty as that with which you have been treating the Indian peasant for 150 years.

"In five years after the Communist international revolution in Russia, 65 per cent of the agricultural population have received their education, and you have today the testimony of half-a-dozen British men and women that in spite of the bloodcurdling articles in your newspapers, the Russians have done their job well. ...I appeal to this committee to allow a commission of Indians to go to Russia to study and to find what the British have failed to discover—the way of

[1] ORCSA, s. 5402, r. 1, f. 156, p. 56.

granting to the people political franchise and education, scientific laboratories, institutions, health homes, compensation and allowances for industrial workers."[1]

Friendly relations of the two peoples, which developed for years, have subsequently become an element of cooperation and friendship of two nations—the Soviet Union and the independent Republic of India. In the last few decades, Soviet-Indian friendship has grown closer and now it is an important factor in strengthening peace among nations.

[1] *The Parliamentary Debates: Official Report*, Vol. 186, 1924-1925, p. 720.

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